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# THE FIGURE OF PETER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: A CANONICAL ANALYSIS

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## PRESENTATION

The following extract is part of a larger study entitled *Petrine Authority in the Formation of the New Testament Canon*. The thesis examines how the figure and prestige of the apostle Peter in the early Church had an impact on the formation of the New Testament canon. The extract looks at the figure of Peter *in* the canon, but in the larger thesis this section is preceded by a larger study looking at how the Petrine tradition, perpetuated especially in the church of Rome, had an influence on the process by which the canon was discerned. My basic conclusions concerning this process are as follows.

The formation of the New Testament is a slow process by which the Church gradually came to give unity to a collection of books, a process in which ecclesial magisterium had an important role through the actions and declarations of bishops, synods and finally popes. The process was a universal one, involving consensus in the Church catholic, but with a special early role played by Rome—the church which more than any other represented and transmitted the tradition of Peter—. It was this church which defended the Old Testament against the Marcionite attack, and which insisted that the canon cannot be limited merely to a mutilated Luke and an edited Pauline corpus. Furthermore, it was this church which resisted any possible Montanist scriptural super-abundance. The great defender of the four Gospels, Irenaeus, does so following a Roman tradition and in a spirit of profound veneration for the church of Rome. If the *Muratorian Fragment* is from the second century and of Roman origin, as is the majority view, it would be another sign of this community's canonical protagonism. If it is fourth century and oriental, it is witness to how Rome's practice concerning canonical questions was appreciated in the East. The closing of the canon was not an action inspired by Constantine's political interest in fostering a united empire. Indeed, whereas his scriptural commission was of limited and local

interest, provoking no subsequent echos, another commission —that by Pope Damasus to Jerome— would have enormous impact reaching to the present day, even though it needed time to achieve universal acceptance. What a Roman empire —with all his political might, his wealth and his means— did not achieve, a Roman pontiff did. This is a point of great importance, though in general its significance has not been sufficiently noted.

The closing of the canon required the communion of the whole Church reaching from Alexandria to Carthage, and was part of a larger process which involved the Church moving towards an ever clearer understanding of its faith and identity. This would result in the great fourth-century credal definitions and in a universal deeper appreciation of the role and authority of the bishop of Rome, precisely because he is seen to be the successor of Peter and inherits his authority.

The formation of the canon also involved the rejection of works not considered a valid reflection of apostolic tradition. In this process of discernment, the figure of Peter had a significant role. Some works stressed the authority of other New Testament figures (eg James or Thomas) in preference to Peter. This was probably at least one of the reasons for their rejection. It is true that there is no patristic testimony explicitly giving this as a motive, but it is also a fact that no work putting Peter in second place manages to enter the canon<sup>1</sup>. Other apocryphal works have recourse to the authority of Peter to back their claims to acceptance. Thus, we see Gnostic and Judaeo-Christian Peters. But their distorted interpretation of his figure was surely a principal motive for their non-acceptance. Thus, the fate of apocryphal literature offers two lessons about the role of Peter in the canonical process: i) a work, to be considered acceptable in the Church, had to affirm the authority of Peter (or, at the very least, not go against it); ii) the Peter the work depicted had to be an «orthodox» Peter, because the early Church intimately associated his figure with the true apostolic faith.

Writers with a canonical interest all tend to show a keen sense of ecclesial communion. This is not only communion with the Church's present —understood as communion between the different churches— but also with its past. This latter took various forms but was manifested principally in a veneration of Church Tradition and of

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1. Even the Fourth Gospel, as we will see, needs to add chapter 21 to make perfectly clear Peter's pre-eminence.

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episcopal succession in communities of apostolic origin. Within these latter, the episcopal succession of the church of Rome is given pride of place by a surprising number of authors. The canon is finally closed in a profoundly Roman context: the African magisterial decisions concerning the limits of the sacred books show the need to seek the confirmation of the bishop of Rome; the canonical collection which will become the norm in the universal Church is Jerome's Vulgate, commissioned precisely by the bishop of Rome; and finally, a canonical list offered by the Roman Pontiff Innocent in 405 AD is generally considered as the last stone in the early Church's canonical construction. The canonical process is thus an act of the Church's catholicity and communion in which Rome and the figure of Peter have a significant role.

Having thus explained the role of the Petrine-Roman tradition in the process of the formation of the New Testament, the extract examines the figure of Peter in the New Testament as canonical product.

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# THE FIGURE OF PETER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: A CANONICAL ANALYSIS

## THE PETRINE SHAPE OF THE CANON

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Explaining the ideas of James Sanders and Brevard Childs, the two pioneers of the so-called *canonical approach*, Eugene E. Lemcio says the following: «If Childs emphasizes the canon as a *product* of the community's faith, Sanders stresses its *process*, a phenomenon which both preceded and followed the moments of "intense canonical activity" which gathered certain authoritative documents together. This process consisted in preserving the reports of God's speech-acts in ancient contexts in a manner that could adapt them to contemporary ones. Here canonization and hermeneutics become almost identical phenomena»<sup>1</sup>. The following study attempts to combine the approach of Sanders and Childs with regard to the figure of Peter. In Sanders' own words, canonical criticism «stresses the nature and function of canon, and the process by which canon was shaped in antiquity»<sup>2</sup>. In my presentation to this extract, I have explained briefly the canonical process but now we will look at the nature and function of the figure of Peter within the canon. Brevard Childs describes his own canonical approach as being all about providing «a theological description of [the Bible's] shape and function». This involves a «descriptive» and «hermeneutical» analysis of the text<sup>3</sup>. I shall now endeavour to offer a theological, descriptive and hermeneutical analysis of the way Peter's figure shapes the New Testament and its function within it.

Before doing so, however, let me offer a brief word about the method I will follow in this section. Childs has often been accused of being a fundamentalist who rejects historical-critical analysis of the

Bible. This accusation is, however, somewhat unfair. He himself, in his 1994 edition of *The New Testament as Canon*, stresses that «the final form of the text is not to be regarded as a monolithic block», and points out that his earlier emphasis on this final form was «in a polemic debate» with a critical method which demanded that one must *always* start by seeking the date and historical context of the text<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Child makes a valid contribution in pointing out an obvious but significant fact: the texts that have served the Christian community over the centuries and nourished its faith are the individual books and (from the fifth century) the canonical collection *in their final form*, and not the «historical Jesus» according to modern reconstructions or even less the «canon within the canon» so dear to scholars of the Reformed tradition.

It must also be noted that the modern conception of historical truth is not the same as that held by the writers of the Bible and the Church Fathers. For example, in the case of the theme of this thesis, Childs notes that the canonical approach «seeks to explore the role of a canonical portrait of Paul or Peter which is only partially congruent with a critical reconstruction of the historical apostles»<sup>5</sup>. The authors of *Peter in the New Testament*, commenting specifically on various Petrine episodes in Acts, ask the following question: «How many of these points which we have just reviewed reflect not the mere vision of Luke or the pre-Lucan tradition, but could rather be seriously considered as objective evidence to determine the historical *career* of Peter and his pre-eminence?»<sup>6</sup>. In this particular study, following Childs' approach, we are not particularly interested in making a distinction between the two. We take Acts as a work received in the early Church. Indeed, canonical criticism is somehow to follow the path of Luke when he wrote Acts, a work whose historical truth is always subject to its theological one. It is a recognition that historical truth is not the only truth, and that even historical truth can be understood differently in different ages, as I have said above. It is an effort to understand just what Luke and the early Church understood by history without thinking that *only* the 20th or 21st century perception of it is the correct one. It is, as modern hermeneutics stress, to have an attitude of pre-comprehension and not one of prejudice: i.e. to be prepared to enter into dialogue with a text and not to force one's own ideas on it. It is, above all, to appreciate that the theological truth of the text is greater than its historical-critical one, which is not to despise the importance of the latter, but just to keep it within its due limits. Canonical criticism properly exercised is a return to the exegesis of the Fa-

thers: an understanding of the Biblical text as a document produced within and for the life of the Church, with its literal sense, but with a more important spiritual sense, which —though with objective, perennial elements— also varies in so far as its answers the different needs of different ages. In this spirit, I will now embark on this study, though I stress that even here, Sanders' emphasis on the canonical process cannot be totally set aside. Indeed, applying Sanders' ideas regarding the text and its interpretation are of great use in deepening in the figure of Peter as shown by the canonical «product». The figure of Peter in this product is never a static one and always involves interpretation and actualization both in and after the New Testament.

## 2. PETER'S PROMINENT PRESENCE IN THE CANON

So much for the *via externa*, what about the *via interna*? How does Peter appear *in* the New Testament? To what extent does the figure of Peter configure the final «product» of the New Testament? To answer these questions, I will examine the figure of Peter from two principal angles, following the ideas of Childs. I will look at the Petrine *shape* of the canon and at the *function* of Peter in the canon. In both cases, I will offer reflections on the nature of Petrine *authority* in the canon. Let us start with its shape.

It is an undeniable fact that Peter appears prominently in the whole of the New Testament. As Christian Grappe points out: «One cannot fail to note, in fact, that even if the apostle in the end wrote nothing, a Gospel and two epistles are found associated to his person among the books which came to form the canon»<sup>7</sup>. And stating the obvious, Brown notes that: «Peter appears in a prominent way in all and each of the four Gospels.»<sup>8</sup>. He offers some fifteen Marcan passages concerning Peter, which, with certain additions and omissions, are basically followed by the other Synoptic Gospels<sup>9</sup>. As far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned, of these fifteen passages, only three are clearly reproduced in Jn. But as Brown says, even though «a great amount of the material concerning Peter which John uses is not the same as that used by the Synoptics», the fact remains that «Jn agrees with the Synoptics in many features of the role and character of Peter»<sup>10</sup>, though it is true that Peter in John is «somewhat less prominent» than in the Synoptics<sup>11</sup>.

In all four Gospels Peter is mentioned far more than any other figure except, obviously, Jesus himself. As J. Barton points out, the au-

thority of the Gospels lies more in the *collection* (the fourfold Gospel) than in the four as *individual* Gospels<sup>12</sup>. They are four views of the Christ event. But, on a lesser scale, one could also call them four views of the Peter event. If as Barton says, quoting Gamble, «the collection, by its very form, provides a critical principle for its interpretation»<sup>13</sup>, Peter's figure in the collection also provides a principle for its interpretation.

For the moment, I propose merely to note the fact: the New Testament is deeply Petrine and especially the four Gospels. Just how Peter appears in them (his function) will be examined in greater depth in the next chapter. Here we are merely concerned with the Petrine *shape* of the New Testament, but we can permit ourselves some punctual observations about different aspects of this shape.

## 2.1. Peter as bridge and balance

We can start with a particular use of Peter's name in the Lucan works, noted by Brown. As this author says: «It is probably not an accidental fact that the name of Peter is, among the Twelve, the last to be mentioned in the Gospel and the first to appear in the book of the Acts. If, for Luke, the twelve apostles constitute the bridge between the historical Jesus and the Church, Simon, or Peter, is he who carries out this role *par excellence*»<sup>14</sup>. Whereas Brown's second sentence stresses more Peter's *function* as a bridge, I wish to make use of his idea to comment on Peter's place within the overall shape of the New Testament. For although this Lucan use of Peter's name is in itself an isolated fact, if one looks at the place of Peter in general in the New Testament one begins to note a pattern whereby the figure of Peter acts often *structurally* as a bridge. For example, in Acts, Peter acts as a bridge between the historical Jesus and the Church's proclamation of him to the whole world, represented above all by the apostolic action of Paul. In other words, he is a bridge between the Gospels and both the description of Paul's apostolate in Acts and the Pauline corpus<sup>15</sup>. It is no surprise that Paul visits Jerusalem to interview Peter (cfr. Gal 1, 18: I will comment at greater length on this incident later in this study), because Peter is the witness *par excellence* to Christ and his Resurrection. Despite his own vision of Christ, Paul needs to pass over the bridge of Peter in order to embark on his apostolic work. Peter dominates roughly half of the Acts of the Apostles in good part to act as a bridge between the mission of the earthly Jesus as described in

the Gospels and the Church's subsequent witness to Him as described in the rest of the New Testament. It is no surprise that the Pope has since received the name of «Pontiff» (bridge-maker) because this role of bridge is precisely the one Peter played, and not least in the canon's overall shape.

For F. Bovon, the structure Gospel-Acts or Gospel-epistle is part of the New Testament's more fundamental structure of «Gospel-Apostle» precisely because «the Gospel has two faces, the Gospel as an event of Christ and the Gospel as apostolic proclamation»<sup>16</sup>. Both Acts and the Epistles represent the apostolic preaching of the Christ event. Hence he says earlier: «A "New Testament" with Gospels and epistles is the logical consequence and concretisation of a Revelation which articulates the event and its proclamation, which implies Jesus and his disciples»<sup>17</sup>. And he concludes: «In my opinion, the structure Gospel-Apostle which is manifested from the first Christian generation prepares the ground for the constitution of a complement or counterpart to the Holy Scriptures of that time, principally to the Septagint. The formation of the New Testament canon was then the logical materialisation of this theological structure»<sup>18</sup>. But the figure of Peter is key to this Gospel-Apostle structure. As the *principal* apostle and witness to the Resurrection, he is the principal bridge between the experienced reality of Christ and the announcement of this experience. Hence in Acts 1-12 his preaching lays down the essential aspects of the Christian kerygma, or in other words the essential interpretation of the Christ event<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, the Gospels describe the event of Christ, Acts is its proclamation, but beginning with the preaching of Peter, the necessary bridge between Jesus and the Church. Only through Peter can one reach the figure of Paul, because Acts 1-12 shows us precisely that the experience of Christ is not *totally* ineffable and can indeed be witnessed to by those who were closest to Him<sup>20</sup>. Having established the possibility of apostolic witness, represented principally by Peter, Acts then presents us with the apostolate of Paul, entrusted with the mission of transmitting this testimony to the Gentile world. And this is followed by the Epistles for, as Robert Wall notes, «it is Acts which legitimates the Church's confidence in its early apostles and so in the letters they wrote»<sup>21</sup>.

Peter occupies a major place within these epistles but, before turning our attention to them, it is important to note that Peter appears in an authoritative way already within the Pauline corpus, and his *structural* presence in its overall shape must not be forgotten, despite

his relatively few appearances in Paul's letters. Paul himself senses the need to be *balanced* by the presence of Peter. Precisely for this reason, for the need to maintain an equilibrium between the Pauline witness and that of other apostolic figures and principally that of Peter, the Catholic Epistles follow. Robert Wall argues that: «The books which make up the non-Pauline corpus may very well have functioned in the canonizing community as Pauline correctives»<sup>22</sup>. He says this especially with regard to the New Testament epistle, «a number of which were addressed to audiences threatened by Pauline tradents who took the apostle's kerygma in antinomian or Gnostic directions. I would want to argue that this historical intent provides us with an important clue in understanding the purpose of adding the non-Pauline corpus to the Pauline one in the final form of the New Testament Letter»<sup>23</sup>. I consider that Wall later on takes his argument too far when he says: «... the canonical "logic" envisaged by the Letter's form indicates the primacy of Paul's tradition since Paul's letters precede the non-Pauline letters. This in effect recognizes the triumph of Pauline Christianity (or the canonical interpretation of it) within the catholicizing church». And he continues: «... the Letter's final form—Pauline corpus *followed* by a non-Pauline corpus— indicates that the non-Pauline letters play a subordinate role, keeping Pauline tendencies in proper check-and-balance. Thus the relationship between the canonical Paul and the canonical "pillars" should begin with the discernment that God's message begins with Paul and then moves to the other apostolic witnesses to correct any interpretations of Paul which might lead to dangerous results for faith and practice»<sup>24</sup>. I think that here Wall is somewhat overdoing it. He certainly has a point in arguing the subordinate role played by the Catholic Epistles with regard to the Pauline corpus and I would agree that the Epistles serve in good measure to balance Paul, and not vice-versa. But it is equally true that the existence of the Petrine and Johannine traditions which inspire certain Gospels suggests that God's message does not begin with Paul but rather with the witness of the Twelve. One could say rather that the Pauline corpus plays in its turn a subordinate balancing role to these traditions. Indeed, it is a witness to the force and importance of the Petrine and Johannine traditions, that after having appeared so prominently in the Gospel genre, they return again in epistolar form to act as a counter-balance to their Pauline balance! Thus, these epistles are Catholic not only because written to numerous or unspecified churches but also because their presence in the New Testament is necessary to guarantee its catholicity. An essential



part of this catholicity —or here we could even use a capital letter, thus Catholicity— is the presence of Peter through the two letters written by or attributed to him.

The New Testament then ends with the Apocalypse precisely because the Church tends toward the escathon. This last book of the Bible signals the escathological direction in which the Church is heading. But one could be tempted to think that the jump between the epistles and the Apocalypse is too brusque. There is nothing to prepare for it. But this is not so, for precisely 2 Pet with its eschatological concern establishes a bridge between the Church's temporal witness and its effort to adapt to changing realities (one of the principal concerns of the Catholic Epistles), and the after-life. Here too the figure of Peter is used structurally as a bridge.

Other examples could be offered of the Petrine figure's use as a bridge in the New Testament. For instance, there is the question of Peter's place within the Gospel of Matthew, which itself is traditionally seen as a bridge between the Old and the New Testament precisely because the canonical vision of Mt shows Jesus as the new Moses, and the Church as the new Israel. The attitude is of fulfilment not rejection of the Old Law: cfr 5, 17-20; 23, 1-3. Indeed, Mt shows a dependence on the Old Law writings by its use of fulfilment formulae (eg Mt 1, 22-23; 2, 17-18, etc). Some authors have wished to see Jesus as the new Joshua more than the new Moses, but I would argue that the Joshua role belongs better to Peter. If Jesus is the new Moses, Peter is his interpreter and assistant, a Joshua-like figure charged with bringing the new people of God into the promised land (the new dispensation of the Church). Hence, Matthew frequently shows Peter as asking Jesus questions in order to ascertain the correct way to behave as part of the Christian novelty and the adequate attitude to entertain with regard to the Church's Old Law inheritance. As Brown comments:

«In the eyes of Mt, it is absolutely logical that the priority or pre-eminence of Peter is transferred from the ministry of Jesus to the situation of the church to which Mt directs himself. In this situation, Peter is considered as the rock on which the Church has been built. When problems arise in the Church, it is Peter who is called upon. It is Peter, for example, who asks Jesus to explain his observations as to why the disciples are not obliged by Jewish regulations on food (Mt 15, 15). It is Peter who proposes to Jesus a problem which was worrying the Christian community, namely, the problem concerning the number of times one should forgive (Mt 18, 21-22). And also the problem as to whether Christians



have to pay the Temple tribute is raised by Peter who, in his turn, is instructed by Jesus. This ecclesial importance of Peter in the Matthean church cannot be explained simply as a consequence of Peter's own naivety in asking so many questions, or as the survival of those most skilled in Church politics. It was Jesus who gave Peter the name which would prefigure the role he would later have to carry out; it was Jesus who gave him the keys of the kingdom; it was Jesus who saved him when he was drowning»<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, Peter within the overall canonical shape of Mt as bridge between the Old and New Testament, is himself part of that bridge.

We have already commented on Lk's use of Peter's name as a bridge between his Gospel and Acts, but the figure of Peter in general in his Gospel prepares for his later presentation in his second work. There is a deep unity in the Lucan presentation of Peter. Indeed, the figure of Peter is crucial to establishing the unity between the two Lucan writings. Brown notes the very favourable description of Peter (and of the apostles, in general) in Lk, «so that the "career" of Peter during the ministry of Jesus concords better with the description of his career as shown by Acts in the primitive Church (...) The Petrine account in the Gospel of Luke does not stress, as Mt, the idea of Peter as foundational rock of the Church, but rather prepares the way for the image of Peter as missionary and confirmer of the Church»<sup>26</sup>. This is shown especially by the three Petrine scenes unique to Lk: the miraculous draught of fish and the vocation of Peter announcing him as the future fisher of souls (Lk 5, 1-11); the prayer of Jesus so that Peter's faith might not fail («and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren» [Lk 22, 31-32]); and the report of the appearance of the risen Lord to Simon (Lk 24, 34).

Another interesting question with regard to the Petrine shape of the canon is offered by chapter twenty one of the Gospel of John. William Farmer, summarizing the ideas of Kereszty in a work co-authored with him, states: «Kereszty thinks that the Fourth Gospel was accepted in the universal Church only with an appendix that claims for Peter the Christ-given role to represent the Good Shepherd of the universal Church»<sup>27</sup>. Whether or not this appendix to John was *necessary* for its canonization is very debatable. Had the circumstances been different, it could perhaps have been canonized without this appendix. The rest of the Gospel, without this chapter, is perfectly orthodox and coherent. But the fact of the matter is that the Fourth Gospel *is* canonized with this appendix. The Church considered that an important aspect of this Gospel's witness to Jesus Christ was what

we now call chapter twenty one, including the prominent role it gives to Peter and Jesus' entrusting him with the care of his flock. Peter's role as shepherd of the Church is an important part of the canonical shape of the New Testament. This is not in contradiction with the rest of Jn. Indeed, as K. Quast notes, Peter and the Beloved Disciple appear together in a number of strategic places in the Fourth Gospel<sup>28</sup>. «This relationship between the two may not be *the* primary concern behind each of the narratives<sup>29</sup>, but their structure and content suggest that Peter and the Beloved Disciple are important characters in the narrative»<sup>30</sup>.

A final example of how the figure of Peter and the Petrine tradition acts as a bridge in the New Testament canon refers specifically to the question of Rome, the see of Peter. It is interesting to note how Acts ends in Rome and how, straight after in the canon, the first Pauline epistle is the letter to the Romans. Rome, perpetuator of the Petrine tradition, seems to be a point of connection between the initial apostolic kerygma of Jesus Christ and its ongoing proclamation in the life of the Church.

## 2.2. The Catholic Epistles necessarily include Petrine epistles

If one wants to follow a canonical approach, the first thing one must do is acknowledge the canonical reality. This is not fundamentalism but merely common sense, 1 and 2 Pet are Petrine works, authentic or pseudepigraphical it matters little from a canonical point of view. If Peter did not write them, then somebody along the line (be it the actual author of the epistle or a subsequent individual or group) attributed them to the prince of the apostles and Church tradition has received them as such. Indeed, in many ways, a pseudonymous 1 Pet says more in favour of the weight of the figure of Peter in the New Testament than if it really were written by the apostle himself! Such is the prestige and authority he enjoyed that this writing (and 2 Pet) made its way into the New Testament under the mere patronage of his name. The essential canonical question is «why did the Church receive these epistles?». A partial reason could be an attempt to achieve a «resonance between the various parts of scripture», as Childs says. The epistles were seen to reflect and echo earlier New Testament ideas. But a stronger reason, I believe, is the awareness in the canonical process that the Petrine testimony is essential to the New Testament epistle genre. As Grappe notes: «Concerning the emergence of

the canon, one will recall that Peter was associated with it in different ways: as a writer, through the two epistles attributed to him; as the source of the work of Mark, who would have played the role of his interpreter; and in some way as guarantor of the tradition enclosed in the Gospel according to Matthew»<sup>31</sup>. Peter's presence was fundamental in the Gospels as genre, it was fundamental in the Acts as genre, and it was fundamental in the Epistles as genre.

Here we can turn to the ideas of Robert Wall concerning the «Epistle-Letter» as a genre. He explains how the epistle «identifies problems and suggests ways to resolve them», whereas the Gospel «tells the sacred story», and he continues: «the canon's final form (...) places the multiple Gospel before the multiple Letter as if to argue that a commitment to God's salvation as revealed through his Messiah (Gospel) is necessarily prior to any resolution of the Church's crises, whether of faith or of life (Letter)»<sup>32</sup>. Peter had already appeared in Mt «suggesting ways to resolve problems», eg the correct Christian attitude to its Jewish inheritance. When a genre appears specifically and principally to resolve problems, it would have been unthinkable for Peter's name not to be associated with this. Furthermore, as we have seen, the figure of Peter acts as a balance in the Pauline corpus itself. Thus when a genre emerges precisely to fulfil this balancing function with respect to Paul's epistles, then, necessarily, Petrine epistles would be prominent among them, having already partly fulfilled this role within Paul's own epistles. Peter appears prominently in all the genres of the New Testament (Gospel, Acts, Letter, and even Apocalypse: cfr the eschatological stress of 2 Pet). This seems to show that his figure is relevant (i.e. has a part to play and has a message for us) in all aspects of the Church's teaching and life: in its essential truth concerning salvation in Christ (Gospels), in its missionary proclamation of this truth (Acts), in its resolving new problems in the light of the Christ event (Letter) and in its eschatological future (Apocalyptic).

### 2.3. Conclusion

Thus, to conclude, the figure of Peter appears prominently in the overall shape of the New Testament. It has its own shape or structure (Joshua of Christ the new Moses; first witness of the Resurrection and thus first «interpreter» of the Lord, etc), which contributes decisively to the wider canonical shape. The Gospels (and the whole New Testament) offer us different views of the Peter event, views which in

their turn give us a principle of interpretation of the canonical collection. Peter's figure appears frequently playing the structural role of bridge within the New Testament canon: bridge between the Christ event and its missionary proclamation, for to go from the one to the other one must pass over Peter. This bridge-like Petrine role is part of the essential canonical structure of Gospel-Apostle, the event and its proclamation. Peter as principal witness of the event is the principal apostle, the event's principal proclaimer, at least in the sense of principal point of reference, a fact acknowledged by Paul and acknowledged by the canon, which obliges us to pass through Peter's ministry before reaching that of Paul. Peter appears as a bridge in individual works and smaller collections: his figure has its role in the bridge-like function of Mt, linking the two testaments. He acts as a bridge between the two Lucan works: the Peter of Lk points towards the missionary Peter, confirmer of his brother's faith, in Acts. He has an important canonical role in the Fourth Gospel, which for whatever reason was *in fact* only canonised together with chapter 21. But this chapter is seen to be in harmony with the rest of the Gospel (a point we will analyse in greater depth later). The figure of Peter, personifying the fusion of personal weakness with a mission to receive and exercise divine authority, is the principal example and a mirror of the general canonical portrayal of apostolic authority: human debility perfected by grace. Whether 1 and 2 Pet are pseudepigraphical matters little from a canonical point of view. The very genre of the epistle as a vehicle to pose and resolve problems in the life of the Church demanded that there be Petrine epistles, for Peter had clearly been shown in the Gospels and Acts to exercise this function with special authority<sup>33</sup>. And just as the figure of Peter had balanced Paul in Paul's own epistles, so it is necessary and plays a prominent role in the balancing function of the Catholic Epistles with regard to the Pauline corpus. Indeed, it is perhaps no exaggeration to suspect that the other Catholic Epistles entered the canon on the back of the Petrine ones. Peter appears prominently in every genre of the New Testament canon, a sign of the Church's early perception that his figure and authority were a necessary aspect of its essential message, its proclamation of this message, its adaptation to changing circumstances and its journey towards its eschatological future.

## THE FUNCTION OF PETER IN THE CANON

Following this explanation of the shape of the figure of Peter within the larger canonical structure, let us now turn our attention to its function. Of course, there is a certain overlap between shape and function, and at times one may talk of one and really be referring to the other. To try to make clear the distinction between the two, I would propose a rule-of-thumb definition of terms whereby canonical shape refers to the position an element or figure occupies in the overall collection (its structure within the overall structure), whereas canonical function denotes what that figure or element actually does, the role it plays. Everything I have said above about Peter as bridge, it could be argued, refers more to function than to shape. Certainly he does fulfil the function of bridge, but I have preferred to view this more from the aspect of shape, because in the very *organisation* of the New Testament, his figure appear at times in a truly structural way. Thus one notes whole *blocks* of Petrine-focused texts (Jn 21, Acts 1-12, the Petrine epistles) which occupy significant *space*, and act almost mechanically as a necessary point of connection (a bridge) between other texts. Quite simply, without them the New Testament would lack consistency, connection and would risk falling apart. With this point clarified, let us examine more closely exactly what the figure of Peter *does* within the canonical collection, what purpose it serves, its role, its function.

### 1. PETER'S FUNCTION IN THE GOSPELS

The best way to approach this question is to identify Peter's function in each of the genres of the New Testament. Let us start with the Gospels, bearing in mind that differences can be found within these in their presentation of Peter. Indeed, as said earlier, they are like four different views of the Peter event. It is, however, crucial to stress right from the start the fundamental unity of their presentation of the prince of the apostles. Differences of nuance and approach with regard to him are surely found in the four Gospels in conformity with each work's particular emphasis. But there is nothing which could justify the view of authors like Käsemann (followed by the Wesleyan scholars Wall and Lemcio) that the New Testament provides the proof and justification of the disagreements found today between the Christian denominations<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, quite the opposite would appear

to be the case. The four optics focusing on the Peter event present a unified depiction which even in Jn, relying on largely different traditions, offers no essential difference. The Holy See's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith provides a useful summary of the Catholic magisterial position on this matter when it says that the list of the apostles,

«endowed with great testimonial force, and other Gospel passages, show with clarity and simplicity that the New Testament canon recorded the words of Christ with respect to Peter and his role in the group of the Twelve. The witness in favour of the Petrine ministry is found in all the expressions, even though different, of New Testament tradition, both in the Synoptics—with different features in Mt and in Lk, as in Mk—and in the Pauline corpus and in the Johannine tradition, always with original elements, different in what concerns the narrative aspects but agreeing profoundly in its essential signification. This is a sign that the Petrine reality was considered a constitutive fact of the Church»<sup>35</sup>.

Thus one can talk of a variety of perspectives with regard to Peter in the Gospels but on the basis of an essential unity, and this unity in its turn points and contributes to the unity of the New Testament in general.

An analysis of the function of Peter in the canon is not to put in doubt the historicity of what the Bible says about him. Everything the New Testament says about him is basically what happened. But the point to remember is that what the canon shows us about Peter does not exhaust his life and relationship with Jesus. If the «world itself could not contain the books that would be written» about the «many other things Jesus did» (Jn 21, 25), then, to continue the hyperbole, at the very least a medium sized continent would be necessary to contain those chapters referring to the Christ-Peter relationship. Furthermore, as mentioned above, Peter is presented according to the mentality and approach of the respective evangelist. The function of Peter in the New Testament thus denotes the way the canon «chooses» to present the history.

The basic elements of this canonical presentation can be found in the various works, classic and contemporary, and the numerous articles on the figure of Peter in the New Testament<sup>36</sup>. As a result, there is no need to give a detailed analysis here, as it would merely be to repeat what is well documented elsewhere. I will limit myself to outlining the principal features, concentrating on particular aspects of special canonical interest and offering a few reflections on points which

have received less attention among scholars. As a first approach, we can have recourse to Rafael Aguirre's brief exposition of the essential lines of the portrayal of Peter in the whole of the New Testament. Aguirre writes: «He is disciple of Jesus, the first called (Synoptic tradition), the first in the list of the Twelve and their spokesman, rock of the Church (Matthew), column of the community (Paul), interpreter of the teaching of Jesus (Matthew). Weak and sinner he represents the incapacity of the disciples to understand and follow Jesus along the path of the cross. He is an example of conversion. He is apostle and missionary (Paul, Acts), witness of the Resurrection (primitive kerygma), witness and martyr (Jn 21, 1 Pet), co-presbyter (1 Pet), receiver, transmitter and orthodox interpreter of Revelation (2 Pet)»<sup>37</sup>. One could also add a reference to his openness to the pagan mission (cfr Mk, Acts and the Pauline corpus), Peter as fisher of men (Luke), and the presentation of his figure as an example of faith, a point I will shortly examine in greater depth. One comment, however, must be added to put the significance of Peter's New Testament role in its proper context. It must be said right from the start that the canonical Peter does not offer an explicit witness to the papacy as understood in modern terms. The function of Peter in the Bible is not to be a 21st century Pope. As Brown says: «It does not matter what one might think about the justification that the New Testament offers for the appearance of the papacy; this papacy, in its already developed form, cannot be observed in the New Testament»<sup>38</sup>. Or to say the same in a more positive way: «In a word, the New Testament proves the foundation of a Petrine ministry and enumerates its essential structural elements, although it does not offer a concrete realisation of this structure»<sup>39</sup>.

### 1.1. The special faith of Peter as consequence of his special mission

Having said this, Peter is shown to exercise a remarkable role in the Gospels. For example, I would argue that merely to call Peter a spokesman of the other apostles is to be guilty of a notable understatement. An essential feature of the canonical presentation is his special relationship with Jesus, God the Son, which puts him in a unique relationship with God the Father. For this reason I wish to examine in greater depth the faith of Peter, together with the contours of this special relationship, because I believe that without this one cannot understand the other aspects of the Petrine figure as depicted in the



Bible. This relationship is all the more remarkable given that Peter is not the disciple Jesus most loves. That role corresponds to John but it is Peter not John who appears as the authoritative channel between God and humanity (be it as interpreter of the God-man Jesus, or as receiver of a direct revelation from the Father as in Mt 16). Commenting on Jn 21 («Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these?»), Goyorrola-Belda, drawing on ideas of Von Balthasar, says: «We should not ask ourselves why Jesus loves John more, but rather why he wants to be loved more by Peter»<sup>40</sup>. The canon shows Peter enjoying a relationship with Jesus which no other apostle enjoys: not the same affective relationship as John's but one rooted in the *initiative of God* (in spite of the numerous limitations in the person of Peter) *to make Peter a special channel for his Revelation to man*<sup>41</sup>. As a consequence of this, Peter is endowed with a specially rich faith to make him an attentive recipient of this Revelation. Let us analyse the example *par excellence* of this, the famous scene at Caesarea-Philippi.

As Brown notes, in Mt 16, 16b-19, Peter is more than the spokesman of the apostles. And he quote E. Haenchen as saying: «Peter here is not the spokesman of the disciples who expresses in words the faith common to all; he is the receptor of a Revelation, raised to a level which no other disciple can share with him»<sup>42</sup>. S. Bartina makes a similar point: «Jesus proclaims that through Simon his Father who is in heaven has spoken. Simon has been spokesman of the Father»<sup>43</sup>. Peter is thus placed in a special relationship with God, raised to a new level of communication with Him, made channel of the divinity, the Father speaking in and through him. The question, however, is not quite so simple, as Brown notes: «But the problem remains as to how this theory can be reconciled with the fact that all the disciples make almost the same confession as Peter in 14, 33»<sup>44</sup>, i.e. in the scene of the calming of the lake. Thus only a few chapters earlier, the apostles had exclaimed: «Truly, you are the son of God», an exclamation almost identical to that of Peter. As a possible answer, Brown later points out: «Matthew, however, has decided not to give the same attention to this confession by all the disciples as he gives to the confession of Peter, because he does not register any laudatory reaction by Jesus to the confession of the disciples»<sup>45</sup>.

This is very valid but I think one could say more. Perhaps the disciple's outburst is not much more than an expression of amazement in the face of an incredible miracle and in a moment of intense emotion. They sense divine power at work in Jesus, without necessarily appreciating his essential divinity. If the declaration of the centurion



on Calvary really was more an expression of admiration than an explicit act of faith in Christ's divinity (Mt 27, 54, Mk 15, 39: more «a son of God» than «the son of God»)<sup>46</sup>, then perhaps the disciple's outburst on the lake does not go much deeper than this. But the merit of Peter is precisely to have deepened, under the influence of grace, in this common emotional outburst, so that soon after, in a context far removed from the emotional intensity of the calming of the storm, he is able to proclaim that Christ is the divine Messiah<sup>47</sup>.

It must also be remembered that Peter experienced Christ's saving action on the lake in a more intimate way than the other apostles. These latter were rescued *collectively*, so to speak, by the word of Jesus causing the wind to cease. Peter was saved personally from drowning by the very hand of the Lord. He had committed himself more: trusting in faith (albeit for a short space of time, before doubt made him waver) in the word of the «Lord» to undertake what in human terms was impossible (walk on water, and especially in a storm). His own deeper *gift* of faith in Jesus, and the deeper salvation he received, would bear fruit after a period of reflection in his deeper confession of Jesus' divine state.

The canonical presentation thus shows Peter occupying a unique position between God (be it God Father or God Son) and humanity. Certainly, he is frequently spokesman of men with respect to God (as head of the apostolic college in its dealings with Jesus). But on other occasions, he is spokesman of God with respect to men, and to fulfil this function he receives a special gift of faith, a special openness to divine Revelation, which puts him above the others. Personally he is not necessarily the most sensitive to Jesus. The deep love of John often allows the adolescent apostle to fulfil this role. It is John, for example, and not Peter who recognises Jesus on the shore after the Resurrection: «It is the Lord!» (Jn 21, 7). But it is Peter's faith which gives him the «instinct» to be the first to «leap» towards his Master: «When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he (...) sprang into the sea» (*ibid.*) He, even more than John, has this instinct of tending towards Jesus, of needing communication with him, due to the gift of faith he has received.

## 1.2. Peter as question-asker

In this context, it is interesting to return to my earlier comments on Peter's role as question-maker to Jesus. Often he appears asking

questions, so much so that one could be led to feel that he is somewhat simplistic, if not to say pathologically inquisitive. But the questions have their function and always lead to an important answer. It is also noteworthy that in one Gospel a question might be put on Peter's lips when in others it is asked by the disciples in general. For example, in Mt 21, 20, the disciples ask how it is that the fig tree has withered. In Mk 11, 21, it is Peter alone who inquires. Quite probably Peter was not the only one inclined to ask but on occasions it seemed more appropriate to the evangelist to attribute the question uniquely to the prince of the apostles. But having said this, not only is he the apostle most given to asking questions, but he is also the one most given to answering them. Indeed, as Grappe says: «It is important to note that the role conferred in this way to Peter does not restrict him to making questions which are in fact banal, but also gives him the opportunity to emit an essential discourse in a sphere as important as that of christology (cfr Mk 8, 29 *et al*)»<sup>48</sup>. This reference is to Mk's account of the Caesarea-Philippi scene and to Peter's answer: «You are the Christ». I would argue that there is an essential connection between Peter as questioner and Peter as answerer, and this again linked to Peter's gift of faith received from God as part of his special mission as channel between God and man. Faith is essentially that: a trusting question-answer relationship with God, expressing our doubts, seeking answers in Him, being open to the answers he gives us and responding with our own answers to God's loving interrogation.

Thus, an important role of Peter in the Gospels is to *question* Jesus: for example, to ask questions about what constitutes the novelty of Christianity (and especially how it contrasts with the Old Law). He asks questions in order to ascertain what must be the correct Christian way of behaviour<sup>49</sup>. One could say that, psychologically, Peter in the New Testament appears as highly *inquisitive*. It is therefore not surprising that when Jesus wishes to establish him as foundation of the Church, he himself uses the device of a question: «Who do you say that I am?». Peter, curious by nature, might have been humanly more attuned to the very device of a question than the other apostles. But the human factor here is only a small part of the explanation as to why Peter outstrips his colleagues to answer it. Peter is Jesus' interpreter and he who most believes in him. He is therefore most able to give a suitable reply. To Peter's frequent «What must we do?», Jesus now answers him «Who do you say that I am?». What we must do, above all, is recognise the reality of his person, believe that Jesus is God. The correct conduct to follow is essentially to acknowledge his

divinity. Right Christian behaviour will follow from this profession of faith. Jesus allows Peter to give this essential answer, thereby somehow transferring his authority to the apostle. Up to now it had always been Peter the disciple questioning Jesus the Master, thereby offering Our Lord the opportunity to establish the criteria of Christian discipleship. On this occasion, without ceasing to be Master himself, Jesus permits Peter to express the fundamental criterion of Christian life: to believe that Jesus is God incarnate. Peter is made Master, participating in Christ's own Mastership. But this Petrine «Mastership» is always within the context of his special faith and his special role as channel of communication between God and man, and therefore as interpreter of God Father and Son. It is always essentially dependent on divine grace. To use an image, he has authority because God has «switched him on» to receive this power, to act as a channel. As a result, Peter's faith has a subjective and objective element to it: on the one hand (on a personal level) it can falter and fail as on the lake, but on the other (at the level of his mission, his authority) it can never waver: «I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail» (Lk 22, 31). The Petrine ministry relies on a divine gift of faith which is irrevocable and infallible, irrespective of the personal faith of the person enjoying the see of Peter. Ultimately, God will not allow his spokesman/interpreter to fail, even though the latter might personally be a failure.

This Petrine interpretative role, present in all the Gospels, is perhaps especially important in Mt. For example, there is no reference to Peter in Mt's Resurrection account. As Aguirre says: «The reason lies in that the specific role of Peter for Mt is not based on his condition as witness of the Resurrection, as is the case for a very important tradition in primitive Christianity, but on his special relationship with the earthly Jesus and on the promise he receives from him. In other words, Mt is interested in Peter as the guarantor of the traditions of the earthly Jesus»<sup>50</sup>. The Matthean presentation of Peter, he argues, must be put in connection with Mt 23, 13, and its reference to scribes who close the door to the kingdom of heaven (whereas Peter's job is to open so as many as possible can enter: cfr Mt 16, 16 ff): «But whereas the scribes block entrance to the Kingdom because they read the Old Testament in the light of their traditions and do not accept Jesus, Peter opens the doors of the Kingdom because he gives the right interpretation to the teachings of Jesus, which have a marked moral accent and do not suppose the abrogation of the Law but its plenitude (cfr 5, 17-20). The image of the keys of v. 19 has to be related with 23, 13. Peter with his teaching opens the kingdom of heaven

which the scribes close to men»<sup>51</sup>. And he concludes: «The interpretation of Peter, the Petrine tradition, is seen by Mt as the authentic interpretation of the doctrine of Jesus and, hence, as the foundation which guarantees the on-going life of the Church»<sup>52</sup>. Thus, in the Gospels, and particularly in Mt, the interpretation of Jesus' doctrine is a constitutive element of the Petrine mission. It is not inconsistent with New Testament testimony that the church transmitting the Petrine tradition should continue this interpretative function. The active role of the church of Rome in the formation of the canon is one manifestation of the Petrine tradition continuing to exercise this interpretative mission in ecclesial life. Rome played a significant part in the universal Church's «intepretation» of the canon, i.e. its efforts to discern which writings most truly reflected the life and teaching of Jesus. The action of Rome in this process is in conformity with the Petrine tradition as seen in the Gospels, especially the tradition Mt represents and expresses.

Thus the Gospels, and particularly Mt, show Peter as question-asker and question-answerer and this as part of his canonical function as spokesman-interpreter of God. In many ways this function is similar to the canonical shape of his figure as bridge. In both cases, the image is one of permitting connection, of being a means of communication between the human and divine. The figure of Peter in the Gospels thereby fulfils a role of vehicle of Revelation. In this it is in intimate harmony with the function of the canon itself. The canon is a collection of sacred writings assembled together to offer in the most expressive way possible a corpus of Revelation concerning God's plan of salvation centred on Jesus Christ. The presentation of Peter is invariably made with the same project in mind: he appears as a vehicle of Revelation, as apostle charged to bring this Revelation to men (fisherman of souls: Lk 5), as rock of the Church (itself the divine instrument to transmit this Revelation through time), and as witness of the Resurrection (the climax of Revelation).

### 1.3. Peter in John

The predominance of the figure of Peter in the Synoptic Gospels should not surprise us as at least two of the three Gospels, Mt and Mk, are intimately tied to the Petrine tradition. Tradition, as we have seen, is basically unanimous in seeing the figure of Peter behind the Gospel of Mk, and modern exegesis acknowledges with almost equal

consensus that Petrine traditions underlie much of Mt. Some authors, however, give importance to the fact that of all the Gospels Mk presents Peter in the least favourable way. But it seems to me that precisely because of the depth of Peter's conversion and humility, it is not surprising that he would appear less favourably in his own preaching<sup>53</sup>. As G. Minette de Tillesse affirms: «Peter fills the whole of the Gospel of Mk. He is found in every page and ever more in the forefront»<sup>54</sup>. And after a discussion of the wide divergence and inconsistencies among different theories which propose that Mk was written in Galilee/Syria, Antonio Rodríguez-Carmona concludes: «together with R. Pesch we believe that it is more suitable to believe tradition than free speculation and to situate the Marcan tradition in Rome in the beginning of the second Christian generation»<sup>55</sup>. What is more surprising, however, is the prominent position Peter occupies in the Gospel of John, given that this writing represents precisely a non-Petrine tradition. For this reason, this Gospel's depiction of Peter deserves to be studied apart.

Two immediate observations come to mind: firstly that Peter appears prominently in Jn; secondly, that he has to share the limelight with the Beloved Disciple. Depending on how one relates these two facts, one can offer a more or less positive image of Peter in the Fourth Gospel. Pierre Grelot offers an intelligent synthesis of them both: «Whatever be the identity of the disciple in question [the Beloved Disciple of the Fourth Gospel], it is clear that the short book which conserves his tradition shows in him the perfect example of faith (Jn 20, 8), of familiarity with Jesus (13, 23-26), of witness borne concerning the sense of the Cross (19, 35). His insistence on the role of Peter is therefore all the more remarkable». For example, the Gospel points out the particular role of Peter to whom Jesus himself gives the name Cephas (1, 42); the beloved disciple lets Peter enter the tomb before him, even though he arrived first and is shown to believe upon seeing the empty tomb (20, 8). «This deference is in direct relation with the function entrusted to Peter: tend the lambs and the sheep of Christ the Shepherd (21, 15-17; cfr 10, 1-18)»<sup>56</sup>. Various objections are sometimes posed with regard to the presentation of Peter in Jn: that Jn's positive treatment of Peter is merely because he was using Synoptic material; that there are moments indeed when Peter appears subordinated to the Beloved Disciple; that Jn 21 suggests a polemic between the Johannine community and Petrine communities, or if it does not (!), then it is not in conformity with the rest of the Gospel. Let us examine each objection in turn.

Kevin Quast, noting the frequent references to Peter in Jn (and the infrequent appearance of the Beloved Disciple in the Synoptics), asks: «Was the only reason he [Peter] is mentioned in John's narrative because he was part of the original tradition with which John is working? Detailed exegesis and careful comparison with the Synoptic parallels have shown that the Gospel of John presents the Petrine traditions in its own way. Furthermore, the Johannine Peter fares well in comparison with the Synoptics. This is particularly noticeable in ch. 6, at the Last Supper, in the denials, and in the epilogue»<sup>57</sup>. And later he says: «John does not include something simply because it was already in the Synoptic Tradition. He is selective in his use of material. For instance, in ch. 13 we find the footwashing episode, in which Peter is highlighted, instead of the institution of the Lord's Supper»<sup>58</sup>. Quast gives a detailed description of the sympathetic and positive treatment Peter receives in the Fourth Gospel. «Even Peter's denials», he says, «in ch. 18, 15-18. 25-27 can be understood in a less condemnatory way than the Synoptic counterparts (...) Peter's discipleship extends to the point of death (Jn 21, 18-19). His martyrdom is commended as a means of glorifying God. His arrest and death are an extension of his following Jesus. In other words, Peter is a true disciple in the Johannine tradition»<sup>59</sup>.

And what about the moments when he seems to appear subordinated to the Beloved Disciple? The principal example might be at the Last Supper when the Disciple is shown as being closer to and far more intimate with Jesus than Peter, who indeed has to go through the Disciple to ask his question about the identity of the traitor (Jn 13, 23-26). But as Brown notes, while the passage clearly shows that the Disciple «enjoys a primacy in Jesus' love, the fact that Simon Peter has at least a secondary role in this scene suggests that he too was an important figure in the community's recollection of the historical Jesus—in reality, the most important among the disciples who are named—. The following scenes will confirm that for the Johannine community, the two most important disciples were the Beloved Disciple and Simon Peter, but the former was closer than the latter to the heart and affection of Jesus»<sup>60</sup>. He offers reasons for the significance of these two figures in the Fourth Gospel: «the Beloved Disciple for his internal importance for the community [eg he is the principal source of its tradition about Jesus, cfr 19, 35]; Simon Peter because he was an integral part of the tradition concerning Jesus». There is no evidence, says Brown, to talk of rivalry between the two apostles. «At most, we can say that this community has placed the figure of the

Beloved Disciple on a pedestal, showing him to enjoy a similar importance to that of Peter, the most famous personality of the ministry of Jesus, more than known in the whole Church»<sup>61</sup>. And, I would add, this effort to present the Disciple on a comparable level with the prince of the apostles in its turn points to and confirms Peter's importance and his position as a necessary point of reference.

Quast offers other examples of a possible «condescending attitude» on the part of the Johannine community «towards the circle of Christians represented by Peter. The Apostolic Christians do not have the intimacy with Jesus and the accompanying spiritual insights which the Johannine Christians experience»<sup>62</sup>. Indeed, it could almost be argued —against my earlier case for Peter as privileged «vehicle of Revelation»— that the Fourth Gospel shows the Beloved Disciple and not Peter as being the special vehicle. For example, Quast notes that on a number of occasions, «the Beloved Disciple serves as “instrument” or “vehicle” for Peter's access to Jesus». Apart from the above example of ch. 13, he mentions how it is the Beloved Disciple who gets Peter into the courtyard in ch. 18 and how it is the Beloved Disciple who first recognises Jesus on the shore and tells Peter (ch. 21)<sup>63</sup>. But Quast says: «However, the Beloved Disciple does not serve as a source of Revelation or saving faith for Peter and those he represents. Such episodes illustrate the perspective of the Johannine Christians: they know Jesus and abide in him in a special way, and consequently they have something to offer Peter and the Apostolic tradition»<sup>64</sup>.

Quast does indeed quote Agourides as saying: «I think that such expressions describing the intimate relationship to Jesus may signify, in view of the disciple's comparison to Peter throughout the Gospel, that John is in a position to correct traditions founded on the authority of Peter, or rather false interpretations of the Marcan Gospel relating to events in the life of Christ and also the personal authority of Peter among the other Apostles». But Quast rightly dismisses this view, saying simply: «However, we do not find any explicit correction of Petrine claims in the Gospel of John». Rather, the portrayal of the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel «emphasizes how Peter, i.e. Apostolic Christianity, serves the interests of the Johannine community as it enters into its second generation», and in the midst of the internal divisions it is suffering. Quast points out how «the Gospel recognizes the community's need for other qualities which Peter represents». The Beloved Disciple «does not assume a role of leadership among the group of disciples in the narrative» and there are various examples where Peter is shown to exercise this role and even where the



Beloved Disciple is shown to be subordinated to Peter's authority: eg 13, 24 (Peter tells him to ask the question); 20, 4-8 (the disciple waits for Peter to enter the tomb though he himself arrived first; 21, 7 (though the disciple is the first to see Jesus, he reports it to Peter), etc.<sup>65</sup>.

The final question relates to ch. 21. As said above, some authors sense a note of polemic in it against Petrine groups; others see the opposite, it is a hand held out towards Petrine groups; whereas others, perhaps conceding this preceding point, proceed to argue that it is not in conformity with the rest of the Fourth Gospel. I would concur with Brown's argument for the basic conformity between Jn 21 and rest of the Gospel:

«We have seen in the rest of the Gospel that the Johannine community accepted the fact, witnessed to also in the other Gospels, that it is not possible to give an account of the ministry of Jesus without speaking of Simon Peter. The only thing the community did was to affirm its own position placing its hero, the Beloved Disciple, beside Peter and showing his primacy in love. We can likewise conjecture that the Johannine community recognised that it could not (at least at the end of the first century) refer to the history of the Christian Church without mentioning the importance of Peter in his missionary and pastoral role»<sup>66</sup>.

And, in my opinion, he rightly concludes: «Chapter 21 is not an attack against the pastoral authority of Peter; it is, rather, a demand for the recognition of another type of discipleship just as authentic as that of the best known of the traditional apostles»<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, «Peter can therefore be described as the model pastor whose role and authority are based on his love for Jesus, and whose first duty is to tend the flock»<sup>68</sup>. Quast, after his detailed monologue on the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, is of the same opinion. «In conclusion, Peter is commended to the Johannine reader as leader, spokesman, witness, disciple, and pastor. The appreciation of Peter in the epilogue is not incompatible with the picture we find in the first twenty chapters of the Gospel, and ch. 21 certainly does not reflect a *reversal* in the Johannine estimate of Peter»<sup>69</sup>.

For this author, the Fourth Gospel shows an awareness in the Johannine community that it cannot exist in isolation from the rest of the Church. «Peter, both in what he symbolizes and in his relationship to the Beloved Disciple, serves as the focal point of that "intercommunity" and "inter-generational" unity called for in the epilogue to the Gospel»<sup>70</sup>. This need for communion with the Church at large would be made even more acute with the passing away of the Beloved Disciple.



«The nature of the Beloved Disciple's relationship to the community and his modelling of the ideal disciple in close, believing relationship with Jesus did not lend itself to the needs of the threatened community. The Johannine Christians were searching for an anchor for their faith, and that anchor was embodied in the traditions surrounding Peter (...) A move toward bringing the Apostolic and Johannine Christians together is discernible throughout the Gospel of John, and it finds its culmination in the final chapter of the Gospel. The passages which bring Peter and the Beloved Disciple together may reflect a later stage in the composition of the Gospel, but this is not to suggest that they are contrary to the Johannine tradition. At least a part of the Johannine community eventually followed the lead of the Gospel and entered into a "partnership" with the Apostolic stream. This is indicated by the presence of the Johannine literature in the New Testament canon»<sup>71</sup>.

Quast touches on an important point and one that says much about the whole canonical dynamic of the Fourth Gospel in its presentation of Peter. It is in its entirety fundamentally in agreement with the Synoptic presentation of Peter—even without ch. 21, one could say, though this chapter certainly greatly favours this agreement—and this despite the fact that it makes use of separate traditions, and even adds new aspects (Peter as universal shepherd, Peter as martyr). Attempts to emphasize, to bring out, the role of the Beloved Disciple in their own way emphasize and bring out the figure of Peter: the authority of the Beloved Disciple is compared to that of Peter, it is put somehow (though not totally) on the same level. But Peter is the necessary point of reference, the standard by which the Beloved Disciple is measured (something similar, we will see, occurs in the Pauline corpus) and not vice versa.

The canonization of the Fourth Gospel could have occurred, I have said, without ch. 21, but the presence of this chapter does show with greater clarity the pro-Petrine tendencies working within the Gospel and its effort to harmonize itself with Petrine traditions. J. Barton makes an interesting observation about the search for «consistency» in the canonical process. Though referring to the late patristic era, it offers light for our analysis of the Fourth Gospel. He says: «The Bible certainly was perceived as a whole by the end of the patristic era, in both Judaism and Christianity. Its internal consistency was assumed to be total: if one book differed from another (as with the Gospels) there was a strong hermeneutical imperative to find an accommodation, perhaps by relativizing both (or all four) accounts so as to make them tell compatible parts of a more complicated story»<sup>72</sup>.

I would argue that the Fathers assumed an internal consistency within the New Testament concerning the figure of Peter. The quest for this consistency was one of the factors which led to the formation of the canon: when a depiction of Peter in a particular work was not in accordance with the assumed figure of Peter, this (among other factors) led to its rejection. This presupposes that there was an accepted image of Peter in the early Church handed down by Tradition. The Gospel/written depiction of Peter had to conform with the oral-«psychological» one, the Peter of the rule of faith. This same process is seen to be at work in the Fourth Gospel. Irrespective of the history of its redaction, the Gospel seems to be aware that it needs to be «consistent» with the Petrine traditions of the Synoptics, «to find an accommodation» with them. Hence it models its own traditions concerning Peter to achieve this: ch. 21 has an important role within this modelling process but it is in fundamental agreement with the spirit of the Gospel of Jn as a whole<sup>73</sup>.

## 2. PETER IN ACTS

Roland Minnerath points out the essential unity between the discourses of Peter in Acts 1-10 and the early teaching of Paul, especially as seen in 1 Cor 15, 3-5. Both constitute the essential initial kerygma of the Church, which in its turn constitutes the essential message of the Gospel and hence the Gospels: «The most ancient formulations of the paschal faith are contained in the discourses of Peter in Acts. They underline the contrast between the unjust condemnation of Jesus and his resurrection by the power of God. The paschal event is henceforward the key to read the whole message of Jesus»<sup>74</sup>. And elsewhere he notes: «The keys of interpretation of the events of Easter are the themes of the persecuted righteous one and the Servant of Yahweh, who died for our sins and whom God has risen»<sup>75</sup>. Thus Minnerath concludes: «The role of Peter in the formation of the Synoptic Gospels is central»<sup>76</sup>.

The basis for this affirmation is what have already commented in part: Peter's discourses in the first half of Acts establish the essential kerygma of the Church about Jesus, the necessary interpretation to be given to his life and ministry. In other words, *Peter selects what of everything Christ did and said the Church must preach, and under what light*. In addition, he dictates how these events should be related to the Old Testament. *The Synoptic Gospels will be written in the wake of*

*and following these basic interpretative guidelines.* The hypothesis that, historically, the Petrine discourses of Acts *might* rather express the general early teaching of the Church, which Luke has merely placed on Peter's lips, does not pose a problem. For Luke, and for the canon in general, it is essential that the hermeneutical key to the New Testament be given us by Peter, that it is he who tells us what constitutes the essence of the Gospels, that it is he who announces to the first Church an essential «summary» or «nucleus» of Christian truth. All Christian scripture will have to accord to this fundamental nucleus. Peter in Acts establishes the matrix of Christian scripture in establishing what could be called the original and most primitive «rule of faith». The centrality of Peter in Acts in establishing this nucleus of truth is not surprising. In this book, and in the New Testament canon in general, «passion, resurrection, apparitions, fulfilment of the scriptures are transmitted together as forming the kernel of the apostolic Gospel»<sup>77</sup>. And Peter is a key witness to and player in all these realities.

Two other aspects stand out in the presentation of Peter in Acts: his role both in the conversion of Cornelius and in the so-called «council of Jerusalem». Both cases serve to show Peter's openness to the Gentile mission. It is interesting to note that this Petrine openness to the pagans appears in almost all the different manifestations of Petrine tradition in the New Testament: not only in Acts, but also in 1 Pet (the letter is written *to* Gentile communities *from* a Gentile city, Rome) and in Mk, the Petrine «Gospel», with its exhortation to «go into *all the world* and preach the gospel to *the whole creation*» (16, 15). The Lucan «tendency towards» Rome itself shows «a tendency towards» the Gentile mission, and Peter's actions in Acts are themselves part of this movement. It is in this context that Peter's disappearance from the scene in Acts 15 should be understood, without exaggerating its significance. For Brown, this disappearance is part of Luke's history of salvation (*heilsgeschichte*). In this sense, Paul is Peter's successor, not —I would argue— in the strict sense of apostolic-episcopal succession, but as the continuer of the Church's mission, now to the Gentiles. Within this theological framework/vision, it is «impossible to draw from Acts any information concerning the role which Peter carried out in the Church after the council of Jerusalem, or concerning an historical succession of determined tasks of Peter. What perhaps is significant, as far as the Petrine question is concerned, is Luke's interest for Rome, which seems to replace Jerusalem at the end of Acts, as the principal scene of the history of salvation (*heilsgeschichte*)»<sup>78</sup>.

I consider that Peter's action in the council of Jerusalem makes possible Paul's mission<sup>79</sup>. Having assured Paul's freedom of action through his decisive conciliar speech, Peter now fades from the scene in Luke's account, and we are shown the fruits and realisation of Peter's authoritative intervention in the mission of Paul. The geographical movement to Rome, the Gentile centre *par excellence*, as shown in Acts represents the triumph of this Petrine-Pauline principle. The continuation of the Petrine (and Pauline) tradition in Rome, above all through the succession of its bishops, represents the perpetual living out of this principle in the history of the Church. The Lucan work —its canonical unity— concludes in Rome. It is true that we are only shown Paul going there, but on the basis of what I have just said, he goes there in the spirit of Peter. That the canon itself is closed through a series of authoritative interventions by the church of Rome or in reference to it (eg the Carthage decision to consult Rome on its canonical list) is merely to follow in the dynamic of Lucan theology and its Petrine-Pauline stress ultimately focused on the Eternal City and away from Jerusalem, despite the initial prominence of this latter city. Indeed, Acts also offers justification and an explanation as to why the Church never accepted as part of its canon the Jewish-Christian tendencies represented by such works as the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and their emphasis on James. In not accepting them, it merely followed the Lucan position. Luke, in depicting the defeat of the pro-circumcision party, shows the ultimate rejection of the Jewish-Christian stance (an uncomfortable effort to preserve Jewish ritual customs while embracing Christianity). And though he shows James exercising authority and in a positive light, there is no question that Peter and Paul and not he are the protagonists of his work. This is the canonical vision of Luke and this is the vision of the canon as finally fixed by the Church.

### 3. PETER IN THE PAULINE CORPUS

#### 3.1. Peter and the Pauline canon

It is interesting to note the vision of Paul of his own «canon» or rule. On the one hand (Gal 6, 15-16), it is a new rule which is part of a new creation, expressing the novelty of Christianity. As part of this novelty, circumcision has no importance. Furthermore, Paul is able to point to a new people formed by this new rule, «the Israel of God».

On the other hand (2 Cor 10, 13.15-16), Paul's talks of a «canon» of apostleship — a yardstick or standard— both authorizing and limiting his activity, because it comes from God. This divine origin gives him total freedom to act, but always within bounds established from above. In analysing the figure of Peter as he appears in the Pauline epistles, it is striking to note how much he conforms to this canon: his figure is profoundly *canonical* in the sense that his presentation is in full accordance with the Pauline rule. On the one hand, he conforms perfectly to the Christian novelty, because the essence of this novelty is the new creation expressed and realised most fully in the *Resurrection of Christ*, and Peter is the first witness to this (1 Cor 15, 5). Furthermore, Paul stresses that in this new creation circumcision counts for nothing, a doctrine which Peter is shown to accept and follow by not demanding its imposition on Gentile converts (cfr Gal 2).

The Pauline presentation of Peter also conforms to Paul's *canon of apostleship*: this canon basically expresses the gospel that the apostle of the Gentiles preaches, which Paul is convinced he has received from Jesus Christ. This is clear from the context of 2 Cor 10-11, in which Paul describes his gospel as «God's gospel» (2 Cor 11, 7) and calls those who preach other gospels «false apostles» (2 Cor 11, 13)<sup>80</sup>. This gospel then is something totally objective to which all must conform at all times, including Peter. There are numerous aspects to this «gospel», one of which —as seen— is the irrelevance of circumcision. Peter follows Paul in this and confirms his gospel (Paul went to Jerusalem to consult him and the other Church leaders precisely to obtain this confirmation: Gal 2, 1-3). What is more, discerning «the grace given» to Paul, Peter (together with James and John) gives him «the right hand of fellowship» (Gal 2, 9). In doing so, Peter and the other «pillars» are shown to accept the divine origin of Paul's gospel. Indeed, so objective, so much from God is this Pauline canon, that Peter himself is subject to it, and when he strays from it he is liable for correction and receives Paul's public rebuke (Gal 2, 11-14).

In a sense it is obvious that the depiction of Peter corresponds to the Pauline canon. Paul would be a lot less interested in talking of someone who contradicted it. But I have wanted to point out this for two reasons: *firstly*, because this fact tells us more about the canonical portrayal of Peter. An important aspect of this is precisely Peter's unity with other apostolic figures, not least Paul. Peter's pre-eminence does not suppress the authority of other apostles. It is rather in deep harmony with it. Indeed, his authority could even be seen to be subject to theirs, in so far as their authority is from God. Hence, Peter in

Paul is shown subject to the God-given canon of Pauline apostolate (to which, it must be noted, Paul himself is subject). And *secondly*, because I will shortly point out how Paul also submits himself to the Petrine canon. This is all the more remarkable in the light of what we have just seen. Paul can consider that in certain essential aspects he has an authority which puts him above the *person* of Peter, but when it comes to Peter's *role* as column of the Church, Paul bows to the Petrine yardstick.

### 3.2. Peter as «canon» of Paul's apostolate

The figure of Peter clearly has a role within the collection of Pauline epistles. Sure enough, it is not the major role: that position is occupied very rightly by Jesus Christ. In second place one could put Paul himself, very logical given that they are *his* epistles. Hence there are numerous references to his own apostolate, his credentials as an apostle and his apostolic authority. But Peter —though appearing relatively few times in the whole Pauline corpus— has a significant role within it. In addition to all I have said above, one could mention the following. Peter acts as another, external measure of Paul's canon of apostleship. By this I mean he appears as a figure extraneous to it, yet who somehow confirms it and against which Paul can gauge his own apostolic activity and authority. Paul talks of the «canon» or «yardstick» of his own apostleship but the «canon» of Petrine authority serves to shed light on that of Paul. Peter is a recognised, objective leader, whose authority is known and recognised among the churches (apart from other references we have seen in Gal and 1 Cor showing that he was well known in these communities, one could also refer to 1 Cor 9, 5. Here, Paul quotes Peter as an example of an apostle with a wife: his example was clearly considered relevant and worth taking into account, not least by Paul himself). As a result, Paul found it useful, indeed necessary, to refer to Petrine authority to defend his own. Indeed, all the quotations from Gal we have seen concerning Peter are not so much interested in the figure of the prince of the apostles in himself, as in the authority of Paul. Paul invokes Peter to defend his own canon of apostleship: hence, Peter confirms Paul's gospel, offers him communion, and receives correction from Paul when he errs from the Pauline canon (proof that this canon is the right one). This is the principal canonical function of Peter in the Pauline corpus. Yet within this vision, though Paul feels able to correct Peter, this latter appears somehow as superior to the apostle of the Gentiles. Peter acts as

a measure of Paul's apostolate more than Paul of Peter's<sup>81</sup>. Paul seeks Peter's confirmation, not Peter Paul's. This canonical Peter is the Peter we see in subsequent Church history, without entering into a detailed discussion of the exact nature of Petrine-papal authority. The Petrine tradition as continued in Rome will continue to act as a measure, a yardstick, according to which other churches can gauge their own action, consulting it with their doubts, seeking its confirmation «lest somehow [they] should be running or had run in vain» (Gal 2, 2).

Clearly the Pauline presentation of Peter in his epistles is very subjective. It is the view-point of Paul. We have no idea, for example, whether Peter really accepted Paul's correction. The assumption from Gal, though it is not stated explicitly, is that he did. In a *canonical* study, this one-sided approach is not a problem for us. We do not seek to discover the *historical-critical* Peter. We are content to examine the theological function his figure plays within the corpus as we have received it within the faith community that is the Church. Peter appears as he does in a collection of writings the Church decided were authoritative. We do not need to ask whether this portrayal of Peter is *accurate* or *real* according to the modern conception of these terms. Rather, what we are seeking to answer is why the Church gave authoritative status to these writings and whether the portrayal of Peter, *as it appears de facto in this collection*, contributed to their «canonization». This is not to suggest that Paul *invented* the Peter who appears in his letters. Paul saw and presented Peter according to his own subjective psychology and needs. Probably what he says is true (Paul can be considered by and large a reliable witness) but with the necessary dose of partiality to which we are all inclined, especially when seeking to defend our position against attack. Paul quite simply tells us what interested *him* about Peter.

We do not even have to worry over-much about the question of authenticity. It is noteworthy that Peter appears in what modern scholars call the «major» epistles of Paul, universally considered authentic, and not in other ones whose authenticity is more debated. It could be considered surprising, for example, that there is no reference to Peter in the pastoral epistles with their stress on Church organisation. Whatever modern exegesis has sought to affirm, the early Church considered all the Pauline corpus as written by the apostle. The only doubts concerned Hebrews. Why then does Peter not play a similar canonical function in the Pastorals? Why was the Church not concerned about the Petrine absence in the Pastorals if his presence in the major epistles was a factor for their acceptance? Perhaps because in the major epistles the basic tenets of Paul's gospel had been laid down



and nothing more needed to be said concerning Peter. Indeed, the silence of the pastorals could be an argument in favour of Peter's authority in the Pauline corpus. The essential defence of the Pauline gospel—including the physical Resurrection of Christ, the freedom from Jewish ritual practices such as circumcision, justification by faith and not works of the Law—has been made in the major epistles: to do this, Paul felt himself obliged to have recourse to Petrine authority. The Pastorals touch on more local, parochial, practical matters: there is no need to trouble the figure of Peter to deal with these. His absence in Eph, Col, Phil, 1-2 Thes, could also be explained by the particular problems these epistles dwelt with, in which an invocation of Peter was not necessary.

To conclude, Paul is totally convinced that the gospel he has received comes from Jesus Christ, of its objective divinity. To use Athanasian language, it is «divinely inspired». But even so, the apostle senses that this gospel requires the mediation of the Tradition of the Church. And within this, communion with the Church leaders, especially Peter, is essential in order not to «run in vain». Paul hands down what he has received, Tradition *from* the Church (even though he is aware that he has also received it from a direct revelation), and he seeks «episcopal»-Petrine authority to confirm it even though he knows he preaches «God's Gospel». This same attitude or spirit inspired the formation of the canon. Paul's interest in consulting those «who were apostles before me» (Gal 1, 17) prefigures Athanasius' concern to learn the testimony of those «who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word» (39 *FL*, 3)<sup>82</sup>. His concern to seek the approval of the pillars of the Church is echoed by Athanasius' awareness that it is not enough for scripture to be «divinely inspired», it must be «accredited as divine» by ecclesiastical authority (*ibid.*) The canonical process which will reach its culmination in the fourth century has its roots in and is fully faithful to the testimony and teaching of the Pauline epistles. In both the process and the epistles, Peter appears as a necessary point of reference. Subject himself to the divine «canon», he nevertheless acts as «canon» or yardstick of other canons, be they of apostolic practice or a collection of sacred books.

#### 4. PETER IN THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

In looking at the shape of the figure of Peter in the canon, we have seen how the Petrine epistles play a role, together with the whole block



of the Catholic Epistles, of balancing the Pauline corpus, in order to make the epistolar witness of the New Testament more catholic, and even more Catholic<sup>83</sup>. We also looked at the debate surrounding 1 Pet as a pseudepigraphical work<sup>84</sup>. I argued that the pseudepigraphy of this epistle, should this be the case, would show it offering an interpretation of the figure and teaching of Peter (and the same goes for 2 Pet). A pseudepigraphical work, in a sense, gives greater Petrine weight to the canon than an authentic letter from the apostle. As an authentic letter, it is almost «more of the same», i.e. another expression of the voice of Peter merely repeating some known ideas of his, with some new ones (eg concerning the Parusia). But a pseudepigraphical work shows a deliberate attempt by a later author, an attempt finally accepted by the universal Church, to make use of the figure of Peter to give authority to ideas which he in his turn sees as Petrine. It presents a doctrine under the name of Peter according to the idea the author has of the figure of the apostle on the basis of the New Testament works and traditions he has had access to, a doctrine which clearly found a willing public to listen to it, otherwise the letter would not have survived to this day. Thus, at the very least, it shows us how the figure of Peter was understood by certain early Christian groups. It also shows the authority this figure enjoyed in the naissant Church. In this section, however, I wish to leave behind structural and pseudepigraphical questions and concentrate more on the function of Peter in these epistles.

To explain this in a summarized way, one could say that the figure of Peter in the two epistles attributed to him has a *closing and opening* function. On the one hand, it «closes» by confirming Petrine traditions found in earlier New Testament works, «tying loose ends», so to speak. And on the other, it «opens» by represents a bridge or opening to future ecclesial traditions concerning Peter.

#### 4.1. Peter's «closing» function in the Petrine epistles

In so far as «closing» is concerned, we see references to various earlier New Testament traditions taken up again in the epistles. Hence the motif of pastor of the flock found in Jn 21 reappears in 1 Pet 5, 1-4, and in the same passage his authority is shown to be based on his condition as «witness of the sufferings of Christ», just as we have seen him being witness of Christ's Passion in the Gospels (albeit a sleepy and cowardly one!). The same kerygma of Acts reappears in this epis-

tle: namely that Jesus had to suffer and by doing so he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (cfr 1 Pet 1, 10-11). Jesus is shown to be «the stone which the builders rejected» (cfr 2, 7), using the same Old Testament reference Peter had employed in Acts 4, 11. Indeed, on the basis of these examples, I find it hard to see how authors like Childs can propose that 1 Pet has nothing explicitly Petrine about it apart from the initial greeting<sup>85</sup>, or how Grappe can say: «one can hence also imagine that the epistle had been written by a circle which called itself Petrine, but whose convictions, when all is said and done, owed little to the apostle»<sup>86</sup>.

In 2 Pet the references to earlier Petrine tradition is even clearer. Peter appears again as special vehicle of divine Revelation, above all by recalling his presence at the Transfiguration (1, 16-18). But to make sure we understand this correctly, the following verse adds: «And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place». Peter is presented as being like a prophet, themselves great vehicles of divine Revelation, and as a lamp shining in darkness. This latter image consciously or not echoes the prologue of Jn, where Christ —the Word, the supreme vehicle of divine Revelation precisely because he *is* God (Jn 1, 1)— is referred to as «the light [that] shines in darkness» (1, 5). If Minnerath is correct in asserting that 2 Pet's destinatories included Johannine churches<sup>87</sup>, then it is to be assumed that he was familiar with the Johannine writings and that therefore this reference to Jn 1, 5 is made with full awareness. Peter here would be thus be claiming to enjoy a Christ-like revelatory function. The reference to his impending death (1, 14) is also sometimes seen as another revelation. It could be, but the phrase «as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me» could also be simply recalling Christ's prediction of Peter's martyrdom as announced in Jn 21, 18-19<sup>88</sup>. The author (the real Peter or, as is generally assumed, the pseudepigraphical one) may merely want us to think that somehow he does know his death is imminent for whatever reason (be it old age or sickness, or sensing that his persecutors are on his trail), but maybe it is too much to read into this comment a reference to a full-scale revelation or vision. As in Acts the Peter of this letter is also shown capacitated to interpret scriptural prophecy in an authoritative way (1, 19-20; 3, 2).

His relationship with Paul is also recalled in similar terms to earlier works: it is a relationship of fundamental communion, but one in which Peter is shown to enjoy pre-eminence by his authority to comment on and interpret Paul's letters (3, 15-16). As already stated,

Minnerath argues that this letter was sent to both Johannine and Pauline communities. Concerning the latter, he comments:

«Paul often intervened in an authoritative manner in his own communities, but he avoided any interference in Peter's sphere of competence. The relationship of Peter to the communities which are the destinaries of his letter is different here. In a tone of exhortation, he addresses himself to communities which he has not founded himself. His message of conciliation is addressed to all the churches. He would like to be a bridge extended between Paulinities and Johannites of Asia Minor. It is remarkable that Peter has understood his message as having to "affirm, consolidate, give an unshakeable foundation to" the faith of his interlocutors. This verb *stèrizô*, which appears in 2 Pet 1, 12 and 3, 17, is the same as that used by the logion of Lk 22, 32, where Peter had received, for the future, the mission of "confirming his brothers"! The magisterium of Peter consists in recalling where the unshakeable foundations of the faith are situated. Peter implores his readers not to "let themselves be carried away"»<sup>89</sup>.

And in a footnote on the same page, Minnerath adds: «The verb *stèrizo* and the connotation of the unshakeable foundation will also appear in the final exhortation of 1 Pet 5, 10». Minnerath's conclusion is that: «In this context of Asian churches in search of unity, Peter has not dodged his mission of "confirming his brothers"»<sup>90</sup>.

These two Petrine epistles thus take up again ideas or «images» (to use Grappe's term) of Peter which were seen in earlier writings: shepherd of the flock, vehicle of divine Revelation, witness of Christ's Passion, his communion with but pre-eminence over Paul, or Peter as confirmer of his brother's faith.

#### 4.2. Peter's «opening» function in the Petrine epistles

These two epistles thus confirm and «close» the Petrine traditions as contained in the New Testament, but in another sense they open up this same tradition to its future development. As Childs notes, in 2 Pet «the figure of Peter functions as the representative *par excellence* of apostolic authority (...) Peter is not just a figure of the past, but he now functions as a vehicle for extending the apostolic tradition, of which he is the chief representative, into the future»<sup>91</sup>. And he continues:

«It is assumed throughout the letter that the true content of the tradition is fully known (1, 12). The function of Peter as the primary repre-

sentative of the apostolic tradition is to extend this apostolic authority to the next generation after the apostle's death. The apostle sets down in writing the authoritative tradition in order that his letter may continually "at any time" remind the Church of its message (1, 15). The issue at stake is the creation of a written tradition in the form of an authoritative scripture in order to maintain the Church in the truth of the Gospel. Vögtle is certainly right in seeing in 2 Pet a primary witness of the rendering of the apostolic *paradosis* into a scriptural form<sup>92</sup>.

Childs further points out that the «the dominant critical view in Germany» sees this epistle as «the testament of Peter in support of the emergence of early Catholicism» and an attempt «to transfer the teaching authority of the tradition to the established offices of the Church, to which is assigned the sole right of interpretation»<sup>93</sup>. The epistle thus somehow looks to the future and anticipates a future exercise of authority under the name of Peter: «Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things (...) And I will see to it that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things» (2 Pet 1, 12.15). The figure of Peter in 2 Pet assumes an authority which will continue after his death, but under his patronage. One could almost say that this preparation of the way for subsequent Petrine authority is the function of his figure in this epistle. It foresees and lays the scriptural foundation for the exercise of such authority<sup>94</sup>.

##### 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE FUNCTION OF PETER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AS A WHOLE

To conclude this section on Peter's function in the New Testament canon, I will offer a few general remarks. The following quotation of Christian Grappe offers a good point of departure for this part of my study. He says: «Concerning the emergence of the canon, one will recall that Peter was associated with it in different ways: as a writer, through the two epistles attributed to him; as the source of the work of Mark, who would have played the role of his interpreter; and in some way as guarantor of the tradition enclosed in the Gospel according to Matthew»<sup>95</sup>. All this is true, but I hope I have shown in this section that much more could be said as well. The Gospels offer us four different views of the Peter event (always, of course, in essential subordination to the Christ event), each with their own distinctive elements but with an essential unity. Key features include Peter as first witness to the Resurrection<sup>96</sup>, rock of the Church, universal pastor,

missionary fisherman of souls, etc. We also see him as «question-asker» and even «question-answerer» (Mt 16, 15-16), as interpreter of the traditions concerning Jesus, but this must be understood in the context of his function as as vehicle of Revelation, as a special channel of communication between God and man. To carry out this function he needs and receives a special gift of faith for he is not only spokesman of the apostles but also spokesman of God. This gift is so special that it surpasses his own weak subjective faith and persists even when this fails. It is a gift, therefore, linked more to the position he is called on to occupy than to his personal qualities.

This consideration leads us on to a new point: Peter is a person, indeed he is deeply human, but the very conferral of the new name (Peter) on Simon converts him into an institution. Yet at the same time this institution always has to be a person. The foundation of the Church is Peter, but Peter in his confession of faith<sup>97</sup>. Thus there is always a profoundly divine-human interplay in the figure of Peter, precisely because he is called on to be a bridge between God and men, permitting access in both directions.

The Fourth Gospel shows a fundamental unity between Peter and the Beloved Disciple. The former is not subordinated to the latter. Rather, the functional superiority of Peter is shown, even though spiritually his relationship with Jesus might be inferior. Just as occurs in the Pauline corpus, Peter is always a necessary point of reference, a standard, for the figure of the Beloved Disciple, whose position is affirmed precisely by comparing and putting it alongside that of Peter. Jn 21, though in basic conformity with the rest of the Gospel, does contribute to harmonizing the work with the Synoptics in so far as its depiction of Peter was concerned, a harmonization which was somehow considered necessary.

In Acts, Peter appears as the interpreter of the Church's essential kerygma concerning Jesus: he selects which of the traditions about the Lord should constitute the nucleus of Christian teaching and under what (Old Testament) light. The unity between Peter and Paul is clearly shown. Indeed, Peter's action opens the way to Paul's mission to the Gentiles. In accordance with the theological vision of Luke, both apostles «tend towards» the universal mission and thus both «tend towards» Rome as centre of the pagan world, even though we only see Paul going there<sup>98</sup>. This implies a move away from Jerusalem and the necessary demise of the Judaeo-Christian group in the Church. James is clearly subordinated to Peter and Paul and the pro-circumcision party ultimately loses out.

Peter in the Pauline corpus corresponds to Paul's own canon of apostolate. Above all he himself is a canon, a standard, by which Paul can measure his own apostolic activity, just as later in Church history local churches will measure their activity against the standard of Rome. And finally in the Catholic Epistles, the figure of Peter has a closing and opening function: it closes because the portrayal of his person and especially his doctrine confirms traditions found in earlier New Testament works. Indeed, if these epistles are pseudepigraphical, they fulfil an important task of interpretation, showing how the Petrine figure as seen in earlier works is viewed and actualised by two of the last writings to enter the Bible. And it opens, because it prepares the way for a subsequent exercise of authority under the name of Peter, an exercise which 2 Pet seems to envisage and legitimize. Two examples of this happening are Rome's defence of the figure and doctrine of Paul and its defence of the Old Testament, which are both very much in accordance with the teachings of 1 and 2 Pet.

Before concluding this section, I would like to discuss three other questions concerning Peter's canonical function: i) the references to Peter's martyrdom; ii) the possible objection that Peter in the New Testament also has a «heterodox» function, in that he justifies other non-orthodox traditions; and iii) Peter's role as column of the Church and his relationship with the other columns, within a canonical context.

### 5.1. The New Testament and Peter's Roman martyrdom

Any New Testament references to Peter's martyrdom and to his presence in Rome are very important because they offer scriptural backing to the tradition of Peter's death in the Eternal City, which—as noted earlier—was (together with Paul's martyrdom) the basis for the early prestige of Rome in the Church. There is clearly no quotation which mentions both facts together (his martyrdom *in* Rome). The clearest reference to the martyrdom is found in Jn 21, 18-19, whereas 2 Pet 1, 13-14 refers to his impending death, but without saying clearly what form this will take. However, as I have argued above, the phrase «as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me» probably does recall Christ's prediction in Jn 21 of the manner of Peter's death, and this is especially so if, as I also suggested, the author of this letter, in communication with Johannine communities, was familiar with the Fourth Gospel. As for Rome, 1 Pet 5, 13 informs us of Peter's presence in Babylon, always understood as a reference to this city. This

brief report is not to be under-estimated: it is the last notice we have in the canon concerning Peter's whereabouts. Just as Luke wanted Acts to end in Rome as part of the theological project of his double work, so the canon has wished to conclude its information about Peter's movements showing him in this city, also —I would argue— with a theological intention. Certainly, all the patristic, historical and archeological evidence points to Peter's Roman stay (a stay which ended in his death). Thus, everything would lead to the conclusion that the mention of Babylon/Rome is above all due to an historical fact. But just as Christians can never ignore the divine mind behind the creation of the universe, neither can we forget the divine mind behind the canon. If the canon's last word about Peter's journeying places him in Rome, it must respond to the intention of the Holy Spirit, to its «theological project», so to speak. As far as the canon is concerned, Peter «ends» in Rome, he gives his final witness from this city: it is a canonical «death» as well as a physical one. This, and the reference of Jn 21, leave little doubt as to the canon's mind as to where and how Peter died<sup>99</sup>.

The testimony of 1 Pet 5, 13 also helps us appreciate better the canonical process. As we have seen, initially the Church placed greater emphasis on its oral traditions and on its rule of faith than on written scripture. 1 Pet would have found general acceptance due to its conformity with these traditions, among which Peter's martyrdom in Rome was an important one. Thus this particular phrase —«She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen»— would have contributed greatly to the letter's canonization. I will say no more on this point because the most explicit testimony concerning Peter's Roman martyrdom comes from patristic writers not the Bible. But the fact is, Jn 21 is pretty explicit on the matter, and so in its own way is 1 Pet 5, 13, so the Bible really does not need to say a lot more. The canon presents us with a basis for this tradition and Rome's living out of it is therefore in full accord with the canonical dynamic.

## 5.2. The New Testament as justification for a heterodox Peter?

An argument occasionally presented is that the figure of Peter in the New Testament not only offers grounds for traditions subsequently found in the Great Church but also for those followed by splinter and heretical groups. Indeed, we have already seen that various Judaeo-Christian and Gnostic groups did have their own traditions



concerning Peter which were, in part at least, taken from the canonical writings and their interpretation of them. Christian Grappe, in commenting on «the frequent recourse made, besides, to the patronage of the apostle», notes how this «attests (...) the authority with which he was adorned in the most diverse circles». Petrine traditions found in the Gospels appear also in the writings of these groups (for example, Peter as first disciple of Jesus, as first witness of the Resurrection, and as first among the Twelve). But, as Grappe notes, some of them sought to plead «an open conception of Revelation boasting at times of the example of Peter»<sup>100</sup>. This is especially the case in those writings which sought to present a «Gnostic Peter».

But could it be said that *today* the New Testament figure of Peter can be legitimately used to justify alternative traditions or «an open conception of Revelation»? Does the canon provide evidence also of a charismatic, non-institutional Peter? A New Testament passage which seems to offer signs of this is the episode of Cornelius reported in Acts 10-11. It is certainly true that, at times, Peter appears in a context whereby the Spirit acts beyond and above the established limits of what is considered ecclesiastical practice: for example, in this episode, the Spirit's intervention demands a change of practice by the primitive Church (cfr 10, 44-48; 11, 15-18). Yet at the same time, in this episode the Spirit somehow limits itself by demanding the interpretative action of Peter. It is Peter who explains what the Spirit is telling the Church: he could always have given another interpretation. And this interpretation must be subjected to the judgement of the Church (cfr Acts 11, 1-4, 18; 15, 6-9, 12-22), in which Peter is shown to exercise an authoritative but by no means authoritarian role. The Spirit acts in a way similar to Athanasius' later description of scripture: divinely inspired but accredited as divine, divine action but needing the Church's mediation to interpret and regulate this action. Later ecclesiastical intervention to close the canon is thus very much in the spirit—following its line, so to speak—of Peter's action in Acts. Thus it seems to me that the New Testament offers no grounds to justify a «heterodox Peter» or any subsequent interpretation of his figure as a «non-institutional charismatic».

### 5.3. Peter's New Testament function as pillar of the Church

The final question I wish to discuss concerning the function of the figure of Peter within the canon touches on Peter's role as column or



pillar of the Church and his relationship both with the other pillars (cfr. Gal 2, 9) and with Paul. Concerning the latter, while this text certainly shows Paul as subordinate to the pillars, canonically he somehow acts as a fourth column, even to the extent of largely eclipsing the figure of James. There is even a hint on one occasion of him attributing to himself a pillar-like authority, a point I will discuss shortly when commenting on 1 Cor 15, 1-11. Grappe makes the significant observation that the canon shows the figures of Paul and James both reconciled with Peter and made subordinate to him<sup>101</sup>. In this, Acts has an important role in complementing the Pauline corpus. «On this path of consensus, the canonization of the book of Acts made also a decisive contribution. It permitted first of all to complete the domesticization of a Paul stripped of an intransigence which made him the spearhead of someone like Marcion and the sworn enemy of certain Judaeo-Christians. It permitted also to underline the harmony of points of view which was supposed to have ruled between James, Peter and the Tarsan, all in agreement to undertake the path of a mission open to the pagans which launched Christianity to the conquest of the world (Acts 15)»<sup>102</sup>.

But if Paul benefits from Acts, the Pauline corpus in its turn plays a beneficial role in helping to canonize the Catholic Epistles. Hence, Grappe also agrees with the ideas of D. Lührmann on the importance of the list of the three columns given in Gal 2, 9 and its role in «the process of admission within the canon of the Catholic Epistles, their presence being to testify to the consensus which apparently prevailed between the great figures of the first generation»<sup>103</sup>. This is an interesting idea: it is quite probable that the Catholic Epistles «grew» in the Church (i.e. achieved authoritative status) on the basis of the authority of its first three acknowledged leaders, Peter, James and John, and (contra Käsemann *et al*) *on the basis of the unity between them*. And the «fourth leader» Paul is an important witness to this. The figure of Peter here is not unique but it is essential, especially in the light of what Grappe says above: the stress in the New Testament is not only to show the consensus between the three (or with Paul, four) columns, but also to show the subordination of James and John —and, I would add, Paul— to Peter. Thus the Catholic Epistles might well have moved towards canonization within a theological vision which gave enormous importance to the original structure of ecclesial authority —and to communion between those exercising this authority—, a structure in which Peter was at the head. It is in this context that I feel justified in arguing that it may well be that the Catholic Epistles of

James and John entered the canon together with those of Peter, but also, as it were, on their back. How, then, does Jude fit into this theory? Perhaps, quite simply, Jude would have been canonized both for its apostolic origin and its orthodoxy. True, Jude is not one of the columns but he was one of the Twelve and thus an original Christian leader. When a letter from him became known in the Church, given its intrinsic merits and universal appeal, it would have begun to achieve widespread acceptance and move towards canonicity.

The reference to these three pillars has an interesting echo elsewhere in the Pauline epistles, in 1 Cor 15, 1-11. Here Paul describes the various apparitions of Jesus after his Resurrection, and he mentions in particular Peter (the first apparition) and James. Here, however, there is no explicit mention to John but rather a generic reference to the Twelve, and Paul includes himself as a witness (vv. 8-11). In this sense, he seems to be putting his own position as a «pillar» over that of John. W.R. Farmer and R. Kereszty call this «a closed canon of resurrection appearances» which «runs the gamut of apostolic authority —from Peter to Paul—»<sup>104</sup>. The term «canon» is clearly used here in a loose sense but it captures an important idea: the Church's witness to the risen Christ had a limited, restricted nature to it with an essential reference to named apostolic or ecclesiastical figures, principally Peter. It is true that one of the appearances was to «five hundred brethren at the same time» but even here there is a note of limitation. These five hundred represent the Church faithful, not the whole world. The Resurrection is a profoundly ecclesial reality, in the Church and primarily for the Church, whose manifestation is kept within carefully controlled limits (perhaps to protect its certainty and clarity), guaranteed by the witness of named apostolic figures (especially Peter, but with Paul prominent too) and of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (apart from Peter and Paul, James, as local «bishop», whom scholars tend to agree was not one of the Twelve). And exactly the same could be said of the biblical canon. Just as the witness to the Resurrection must start with Peter, end with Paul, and pass through both ecclesiastical authority and the general recognition of the Church faithful, so too with the New Testament canon. The presence of Peter is key to the canon because he was a key witness to the Resurrection, a fact which was an essential aspect of the Church's primitive kerygma.

In summary, the canon shows us a Peter acting as pillar of the Church in unity with the other pillars and with Paul (a sort of fourth pillar), who are all depicted as subordinate to Peter. The canon weaves

together different aspects of this fundamental unity, one aspect supporting the other. This is hardly surprising: a building only stands when its pillars act together to support the structure. Neither the Church nor the canon could stand on the basis of divided apostolic authority. Acts complements and supports Paul, and the Pauline corpus contributes decisively to the canonization of the Catholic Epistles. Indeed, these epistles probably moved towards canonization on the basis of this unity of apostolic witness, a unity reinforced by the testimony of Paul to it (Gal 2, 9), and one in which Peter's pre-eminence is a significant fact. Peter also appears prominently in another context in which the principal early Church leaders are invoked, namely in Paul's Resurrection «canon» of 1 Cor 15, 1-11 (here, the fourth leader, Paul, temporarily replaces John). Once again his role is crucial. And once again this structure of united apostolic witness with a pre-eminent Peter is reflected in the reality of the New Testament canon. Peter must be principal witness in the canon because he is the first witness to the Resurrection, but this witness needs also that of other apostles (principally Paul), and must pass through the Church's pastors and indeed through all the faithful. This is how the canon came to be<sup>105</sup>.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

We have come to the end of our discussion of the shape, function and authority of Peter in the New Testament, or, in other words, of *how the figure of Peter contributes to configure the canonical product of the New Testament*. Before moving onto the next chapter, which is a discussion of the *relationship* between the canonical process and the canonical product as far as Peter is concerned, I would like to end with a few reflections of Pheme Perkins and my own comments on them. Perkins writes:

«Paul depicts himself as “apostle” and father to those churches he has founded (1 Cor 4, 15; 9, 2). Rather, Peter is the universal “foundation” for all the churches. The canon itself might be viewed from this Petrine perspective. With the attribution of Mark to Peter's oral tradition and the addition of Peter as shepherd in Jn 21, 15-17, all four Gospels as well as Acts have some connection to Petrine tradition. 1 Pet directs exhortations much like that found in Pauline letters to churches in Asia Minor. 2 Pet even brings the Pauline letter collection into the Petrine fold»<sup>106</sup>.

Thus I would conclude that all the genres of the New Testament reveal a deeply Petrine presence: the very *shape* of the canon says much about his *authority*, and this in turn leads one to the conclusion that the principal *function* of the figure of Peter in the New Testament is precisely to *show this authority in action*. Concerning the latter, Peter in the New Testament is many things: figure of the Christian, figure of faith, figure of the repentant sinner, and so on. But above all he is figure of authority and, therefore, as a consequence, of unity. He is not just any Christian who has faith or who repents. He is the principal apostle and rock of the Church who does so.

It is interesting how the canon first presents us with the figure of Peter. With a number of brush-strokes, few but very significant, Mt leads us to the crucial scene of Caesarea-Philippi. He is the first apostle called (4, 18-20), together with his brother Andrew, and immediately we are informed of his missionary future («Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men»). Mt also informs us straight away of his institutional, his functional name, his name as bearer of authority (Peter: even before giving us the explanation of it, which only comes in Mt 16). The next mention is when he receives a special favour from Jesus in the form of the cure of his mother-in-law (8, 14-15). This cure, however, is not merely a kind act to a favoured apostle. It comes within the context of Jesus' authority over sickness and unclean spirits (8, 16-17), an authority which is shown to be an essential aspect of the mission of the Twelve (10, 1), of whom Peter is the first, as we are told in the next verse (10, 2). His functional name is mentioned again. Hence, Peter is the first beneficiary among the Twelve of Christ's authority because he is the first to participate in it. His eminent involvement, analysed above, in the scene of the calming of the lake then follows (14, 22-33), showing his special (though wavering) faith and the unique way he is saved by Jesus. Then in 15, 15 he is depicted as questioner-interpreter of Jesus, giving Our Lord a chance to explain an important teaching. Only once these different aspects of his authority and role are established, does Mt 16 arrive, with an explicit declaration of the immense authority delegated to him by Jesus. These are the first and basic lines of the canonical presentation of Peter, and show above all a person *who has received authority*. With these in place, Peter's personality and function are filled out in the rest of Mt and the other canonical books. From the very start, the canon's shape shows Peter's authoritative function.

## NOTES

1. R.W. WALL-E.E. LEMCIO, *The New Testament as Canon. A Reader in Canonical Criticism*, Sheffield 1992, p. 32.
2. J.A. SANDERS, *Canon and Community. A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, Philadelphia 1984, p. 22.
3. B.S. CHILDS, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction*, Valley Forge (Pennsylvania) 1994, henceforth referred to as CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 36.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
6. R.E. BROWN-K.P. DONFRIED-J. REUMANN, *Peter in the New Testament*, Minneapolis 1973 (henceforth, BROWN, *Peter NT*). Unfortunately, I have only been able to consult this work in its Spanish translation (*Pedro en el Nuevo Testamento*, Santander 1975. The above quotation is from its p. 47). As a result, all my quotations of this work are my own translation from the Spanish, and are therefore likely to differ in some way from the original English. From now on, for the sake of simplicity, I will simply say «Brown» though referring to all three authors and all page references given will refer to the Spanish translation.
7. C. GRAPPE, *Images de Pierre aux premiers siècles*, Paris 1995, p. 134.
8. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 20.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
12. J. BARTON, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text. The Canon in Early Christianity*, Louisville (Kentucky) 1997, p. 153.
13. *Ibid.*
14. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 121.
15. A bridge also in the fact that he himself carries out his own apostolic action, as is seen in Acts 1-12.
16. F. BOVON, *La structure canonique de l'Évangile et de l'Apôtre*, in «Cristianesimo nella storia» 15 (1994) 562.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 559.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 568.
19. I will comment more on the Petrine kerygma of Acts 1-12 later.
20. Or in other words, only through Peter can one reach the missionary proclamation to the Gentiles. This is shown not only by the fact of Peter's role in the conversion of Cornelius, thus opening authoritatively the Church to this mission (if Peter had not done so, who would have accepted Paul's authority to do so?), and by the fact that Paul consults Peter before undertaking his apostolic action, but also by the

mere canonical fact —by the very evidence of words on parchment, if one likes— that before reaching Paul (his apostolate as described in Acts and his epistles), one must read first about Peter and his activity.

21. R.W. WALL-E. E. LEMCIO, *o.c.*, p. 318.
22. R.W. WALL-E. E. LEMCIO, *o.c.*, p. 172.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.
25. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 103.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
27. W.R. FARMER-R. KERESZTY, *Peter and Paul in the Church of Rome. The Ecumenical Potential of a Forgotten Perspective*, New York 1990, p. 123.
28. K. QUAST, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Figures for a Community in Crisis*, Sheffield 1989.
29. For example, «the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple is subservient to the christological thrust of each narrative» (*ibid.*, p. 166).
30. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
31. C. GRAPPE, *Images de Pierre aux premiers siècles*, Paris 1995, p. 293.
32. R.W. WALL-E. E. LEMCIO, *o.c.*, p. 167.
33. For example, in Acts 1, 15-26, it is he who signals the need to appoint a replacement for Judas and establishes the procedure by which this should be done. And it is he who announces the punishment Ananias and Sapphira must incur (cfr 5, 1-11).
34. Childs refers to ideas of Käsemann whereby the canon (in Childs' words) «far from being the basis for the Church's unity, offers instead major grounds for its disunity» (cfr CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 20).
35. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH, *Some Considerations on the Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church*, Rome 1998, n. 3.
36. Among the books, see for example: O. CULLMANN, *Saint Pierre. Disciple-Apôtre-Martyr*, Neuchâtel 1952; BROWN, *Peter NT*; R. AGUIRRE-MONASTERIO (ed.), *Pedro en la Iglesia Primitiva*, Estella (Navarra) 1991, henceforth referred to as AGUIRRE, *Pedro*. More recent works include: S. BUTLER-N. DAHLGREN-D. HESS, *Jesus, Peter and the Keys: a Scriptural handbook on the Papacy*, Goletta (CA) 1996; S.K. RAY, *Upon this Rock: St Peter and the Primacy of Rome in the Scriptures and the early Church*, San Francisco 1999; and P. PERKINS, *Peter, Apostle for the whole Church*, Minneapolis 2000. An outstanding *status quaestionis* of the contemporary theological investigation and debate on the figure of Peter is given by Ramón GOYARROLA-BELDA in his recently completed doctoral thesis «Iglesia de Roma y ministerio petrino. Estudio sobre el sujeto del primado (*sedes o sedens*) en la literatura teológica postconciliar», Pontificia Universidad de la Santa Cruz, «Dissertationes. Series Theologica-VIII», Roma 2002. It is especially remarkable for the number of articles consulted and the author's clarity in synthesizing the information he has gathered. The work will shortly be published. Its approach is principally dogmatic but it does not neglect the scriptural foundations. My only complaint is that —necessarily, I imagine, given the wide scope of his thesis— his consideration of the figure of Peter in its canonical aspects is limited to a mere page (!) based largely on a consideration of the *Muratorian Fragment* as a second century document.
37. R. AGUIRRE-MONASTERIO, «Presentación», in AGUIRRE, *Pedro*, 15.
38. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 18.
39. R. GOYARROLA-BELDA, *o.c.*, p. 170 (he is referring to ideas of L. Scheffczyk).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

41. This point needs to be properly understood. For example, in no way do I seek to play down the significance of John's experience of Christ who enjoys what could truly be called a unique insight into the mystery of Christ (cfr Jn 1, 14; 1 Jn 1, 1-3). As evangelist and hagiographer he too acts as a channel of God's revelation and he too receives a revelation from God (cfr Apoc 1, 1). But nowhere in the Gospels is he depicted either as the interpreter of Jesus or as his authoritative spokesman. His gifts received seem to be on a more personal and local level: his own insight into the mystery of Jesus which he then shares with the churches he founded. Even though the Church later saw the universal value in the Johannine writings and therefore canonized them, there is not the same sense of universal authority in his figure.
42. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 87, nt. 200. He is quoting from E. HAENCHEN, *Der Weg Jesu*, Berlin 1966.
43. S. BARTINA, *Pedro, voz de Dios el Padre*, in «Estudios Bíblicos» 37 (1978) 292, quoted by R. GOYARROLA-BELDA, *o.c.*, p. 172.
44. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 87, nt. 200.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
46. For we cannot rule out that the centurion received the gift of faith at that moment, enabling him to declare Christ's divinity. Though the fact that Mt 27, 54 shows he was not alone in his declaration is a possible argument against this («the centurion and those who were with him... were filled with awe and said ...»). It is less likely, though not impossible, that various people were similarly inspired. Furthermore, Lk's watered-down account («he praised God, and said: "Truly this man was innocent"»: Lk 24, 47) also suggests a more limited and imperfect appreciation of Jesus by the centurion.
47. And indeed far removed from any place or stimulus which could prompt strong emotions on the part of the apostles, such as Jerusalem with all its Messianic connotations. The fact that Peter's confession took place in a predominantly Gentile area is another fact in favour of its significance. Nothing human or worldly, not even geographical surroundings, nothing of «flesh and blood», or stone or soil, prompted Peter's declaration of faith.
48. C. GRAPPE, *Images de Pierre aux premiers siècles*, Paris 1995, p. 128.
49. For example, commenting on Mt 17, 24-27, Rafael Aguirre shows Peter presented «as the one to ask in order to know the right interpretation of the commands of Jesus, because he [Jesus] has communicated them to him. At question was a point of the Christian *halaka* which was very conflictive in the Judaeo-Christian community. The answer proposed is clear in its principles —Jesus affirms the liberty of the children— but flexible in its practice, which seeks not to break with those who felt in conscience bound by Jewish precepts. As we will see, this attitude is characteristic of the Petrine tradition». Cfr R. AGUIRRE-MONASTERIO, *Pedro en el Evangelio de Mateo*, in AGUIRRE, *Pedro*, 47.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 55. Child makes a similar point: «Of all the Gospels Matthew is the only one employing the term *ekklesia* to describe the Church (16.18; 18.17). Moreover, the reference to an entity with an external, historical shape within the world is not an isolated phenomenon. It fits in with his general portrayal of a concrete, established order of community (ch. 18), with bearers of office (23, 8 ff.) which possess ecclesiastical authority to "bind and loosen" (16, 16 ff.) and to forgive sins (9, 2 ff.). The role of Peter in the Gospel does not function as a type of the individual



- Christian (*contra* Schulz, 217) but Peter serves a unique function to establish theological continuity between the earthly Jesus and a community which confesses his lordship (Hoffmann, 106). Not only does he receive Christ's special blessing (16, 16 ff.), and the guardianship of the "keys" (v. 19), but it is Peter who is addressed with the continuing questions which occupy the post-Resurrection Church (17, 24, etc.). Cfr CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 77-78.
53. No one doubts, for example, that St Teresa of Avila's *Libro de la Vida* is her own work, even though it is full of references to her unworthiness and her wretched life before her conversion and even afterwards.
  54. G. MINETTE DE TILLESSE, *Le secret messianique dans l'Evangile de Marc*, Paris 1968, p. 439, quoted by A. RODRÍGUEZ-CARMONA, in *La figura de Pedro en el Evangelio de Marcos*, in AGUIRRE, *Pedro*, 33.
  55. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
  56. P. GRELOT, *La Tradition Apostolique*, Paris 1995, p. 285.
  57. K. QUAIST, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Figures for a Community in Crisis*, Sheffield 1989, p. 162.
  58. *Ibid.*, p. 206, nt. 19.
  59. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164. Cfr pp. 162-164 in general.
  60. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 128.
  61. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
  62. K. QUAIST, *o.c.*, p. 166.
  63. Though it must be said that it is not totally clear that the «disciple» of ch. 18 is actually the Beloved Disciple.
  64. *Ibid.*
  65. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167. The Agourides' quotation is from S. AGOURIDES, *Peter and John in the Fourth Gospel*, in F.L. CROSS (ed.), *Studia Evangelica* 4, Berlin 1968. The detail of Jn 21, 7 is an interesting one. The evangelist does not merely state that John *exclaimed* «It is the Lord!», but goes to the trouble to inform us that he «said [this] to Peter».
  66. BROWN, *Peter NT*, 138.
  67. *Ibid.* I would only add that, in my view, this «demand for the recognition of another type of discipleship», i.e. that of the Beloved Disciple, appears more clearly in the *rest* of the Fourth Gospel than in ch. 21 where really the great stress is on Peter, even though vv. 20-24 somehow re-focus the chapter's attention on the Beloved Disciple and his role as authoritative witness of traditions about Jesus.
  68. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
  69. K. QUAIST, *o.c.*, p. 164. This view, he notes, is *contra* A.H. MAYNARD, *The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel*, in «New Testament Studies» 30 (1984) 531-548.
  70. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
  71. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.
  72. J. BARTON, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text. The Canon in Early Christianity*, Louisville (Kentucky) 1997, p. 155.
  73. Indeed, it might even have been more appropriate to deal with ch. 21 in the section on the «shape» of the figure of Peter in the canon, because this chapter does act in a structural way —as a «block», so to speak— to help integrate the larger «block» of the Fourth Gospel into the overall collection of the Fourfold Gospel by harmonizing it more with the Synoptic vision of Peter. But the chapter is so bound up with considerations on Peter's function that I have opted to deal with it in this section.



74. R. MINNERATH, *De Jérusalem à Rome. Pierre et L'unité de l'Église Apostolique*, Paris 1994, p. 107.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 111. And he observes that «the continuity between the primitive Petrine kerygma and the christology of the Servant is also attested in 1 Pet» (*ibid.*).
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
78. BROWN, *Peter NT*, p. 60.
79. Josep Rius-Camps points out how the Occidental recension states that Peter's speech, in reaction to the conciliar debate, was «inspired by the Spirit». This, says Rius-Camps, «could not be otherwise, since he [Peter] had been fully freed from all the bonds which had also held him down» (J. RIUS-CAMPS, *Comentari als Fets dels Apòstols*, vol. III, Barcelona 1995, p. 168). Rius-Camps argues (especially in his 1993 vol. II) that Acts shows us Peter undergoing a whole conversion process, one which finally leads him to be able to make his decisive speech in the council. According to the Occidental Recension reading, Peter is once again shown as recipient of divine revelation. Whatever authority one might give to this reading, I think, in the context of the whole speech, Rius-Camps is justified in affirming that «Peter's discourse, more than a defence in juridical terms, which could easily be refuted, is a prophetic vindication of the pagan cause, and therefore cannot be countered or contested, just as Jesus had promised (cfr Lk 21, 15; cfr Acts 6, 10, especially the Occidental Text)» (v. III, p. 168).
80. It is, of course, even clearer in Gal 1, 6-9, where even an «angel from heaven» or «anyone» who «preaches to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you», should be «accursed».
81. Though Paul's public rebuke of Peter is to an extent a measure of Peter's apostolic activity. Indeed, in this particular instance, Paul measures it and finds it wanting.
82. It is true that the quoted phrase of Paul is part of a sentence where he actually plays down the importance of these apostles. These are the «flesh and blood» in Jerusalem he decides *not* to confer with immediately after his conversion. Rather he prefers to go to Arabia and then to Damascus. But the whole context of Gal 1-2 shows Paul acutely aware that he must consult the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to seek confirmation of his gospel.
83. Childs talks of «those Protestant interpreters who continue to insist that 2 Pet is an egregious example of "early Catholicism" in which the Church lays sole claim to a teaching office through Peter's authority» (cfr CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 472).
84. There seems to be little debate concerning 2 Pet: its pseudigraphy is generally considered a fact by the majority of modern scholars.
85. As quoted above, he says that «no obvious reason —historical, sociological, doctrinal— has been established for assigning the letter to the apostle. Nor is there any clear legitimating function provided by the appeal to Peter's authority» (CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 455).
86. C. GRAPPE, *Images de Pierre aux premiers siècles*, Paris 1995, p. 149.
87. He argues that Peter is writing to various Asian churches which are suffering rifts and divisions: «Some communities claim their origin in Paul, others in the Beloved Disciple». Cfr R. MINNERATH, *De Jérusalem à Rome. Pierre et L'unité de l'Église Apostolique*, Paris 1994, p. 443. See also this page for his explanation as to why the destinatories are Asian churches.
88. An argument further supported if, as suggested above, the author of 2 Pet really was aware of the Gospel of John.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 444.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
91. CHILDS, *NT as Canon*, 470.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 471. I will examine in a later section the canonical pretensions of 2 Pet.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 468-469.
94. Does 2 Pet consciously consider itself to be scripture? I would suspect that it does. If it claims scriptural status for the Pauline writings (3, 16), I find it hard to believe that it would give itself a lesser rank, especially given that the Peter of this letter considers himself an authoritative interpreter not only of Paul but also of Old Testament prophecy (1, 19). Indeed, this quotation («And we have the prophetic word made more sure») could also suggest that he considers himself somehow «prophetic». Having said this, 2 Pet's appreciation of scripture might be more in the line of Papias: scripture for him is important but perhaps even more important is oral tradition. Hence he urges his readers to «remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles» (3, 2). Whereas these «predictions» were probably contained in a written form (papyri of the Jewish prophets) —though they could also have been passed down orally—, the above quotation suggests that the «commandment of the Lord» was transmitted orally more than scripturally.
95. C. GRAPPE, *o.c.*, p. 293.
96. Of course this is always to be understood as first «authoritative» witness to the Resurrection and is not in fundamental contradiction with other traditions which show the holy women, and specifically Mary Magdalene, as its first witnesses (eg Mt 28, Mk 16). The testimony of women in the society of the first century had no legal or public value, and the early Church was not totally exempt from this prevailing attitude (it was, to its credit, however, at least partially exempt from it, in so far as it *did* record these apparitions, handed down in its tradition and then reported in the Gospels). But it is only the apparitions to Peter which come to form part of its *essential* kerygma because of everything he represents as first (principal) apostle.
97. For a full discussion of this, cfr R. GOYARROLA-BELDA, *Iglesia de Roma y ministerio petrino. Estudio sobre el sujeción del primado («sedes» o «sedens») en la literatura teológica postconciliar*, doctoral thesis at the Pontificia Universidad de la Santa Cruz, «Dissertationes. Series Theologica-VIII», Roma 2002, p. 184. Goyarrola-Belda quotes Ratzinger and Tillard but himself underlines the personal aspect of Peter's faith.
98. Christian Grappe suggests that Peter's historical move to Rome signified not only the move from one people to another, from one Temple to another (as the establishment of the Christian church of Jerusalem had signified), but the move from a people to an empire. Christianity had become the religion of the whole world. And this way of seeing things, he notes, was shared by Luke «who in the second part of his work, shifts the framework of the Christian mission from Jerusalem to Rome» (cfr C. GRAPPE, *o.c.*, p. 295). The establishment of the Petrine tradition, and with it of the Church's centre, in Rome, was very much in conformity with the spirit of the Petrine tradition's openness to the universal mission, a reality also seen in Acts.
99. It is also worth bearing in mind that 1 Pet is clearly written in a context of persecution. References to suffering, to the need to stand fast and to an imminent end abound (see for example, 1, 6; 3, 14. 17; 4, 1. 7. 12-16; 5, 1. 8-10. 12). While the epistle does seem to suggest more that Peter is writing to a persecuted community than that he himself is undergoing persecution, the sentence «the end of all things is at hand» (4, 7) and the description of himself as «partaker of the glory that is to be revealed» (5, 1) also suggest that the apostle considered his own days numbered, perhaps also as a result of the persecution.

100. C. GRAPPE, *o.c.*, p. 293.
101. Concerning Paul and James' subordination to Peter, see everything I have said above: Paul in Gal shows himself subordinate to Peter and the pillars, going to visit them to seek their confirmation and fellowship (1, 18-19; 2, 1-2. 9). And concerning the relationship between Peter and James, the fact is that Peter and Paul, and not James, clearly dominate Acts. I will, however, say more about this question in the section on Peter's authority in the New Testament. I have already referred to John's subordination to Peter shown in the Fourth Gospel. His very passive role in Acts confirms this: he appears together with Peter in the first chapters (with Peter taking the lead) but has no role in the «Council» of Acts 15. In Gal he appears as a column (2, 9), but even here he is less prominent than the other two. For example, Paul did not seek to visit him on his first visit (as a Christian) to Jerusalem but limited himself to seeing Peter and James (1, 18-19).
102. C. GRAPPE, *o.c.*, p. 294.
103. *Ibid.*, nt. 23. The wording is Grappe's.
104. W.R. FARMER-R. KERESZTY, *Peter and Paul in the Church of Rome. The Ecumenical Potential of a Forgotten Perspective*, New York 1990, p. 46.
105. It is a striking fact that John's role in the canon is both very important (a Gospel, three epistles and the Apocalypse are all linked to his name) but also somewhat isolated. Apart from brief references to him in the Synoptics and what I have mentioned above concerning his presence in Acts and Gal (also brief references), the real witness to his authority comes from *himself*, i.e. the Johannine writings. True, Paul shows him as pillar but not a particularly dominant one. Evidence within the New Testament itself concerning the authority of the tradition of John rests largely on John's own claims to authority (eg Jn 21, 24). In this sense, the Johannine writings stand in a sort of splendid isolation with respect to the other canonical works, which do somehow support each other mutually.
106. P. PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, Minneapolis 2000, p. 184.

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